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A LIFE INTEREST.

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CHAPTER IV.

PUTTING ON THE SCREW.

THE first few days after George's departure were terribly blank to Marjory. She was left very much to herself, as Mrs. Acland did not seem to remember her existence, save when she wanted her help in needlework or with the children. So Marjory had plenty of time to mend Dick's socks and read what books she could find. These, with a certain degree of scolding bestowed on her adopted brother for untidiness, employed her days and evenings; but as Dick's answers were much smoother than George's used to be, the oddly assorted couple settled down into companionship much sooner than might have been expected.

A few hasty lines had been sent ashore by the young sailor with the pilot—brave lines enough, yet pervaded by an unconscious tone of sadness which revived Marjory's grief and resentment. This epistle had been inclosed in one to Mr. Acland, and was delivered as the family sat at breakfast.

"George seems very well satisfied so far," said his father. "I dare say he will get on all the quicker for not being trammelled by the regulations of the Navy."

"No doubt of it," responded his wife.

"What does he say to you, Marjory?"

Marjory handed her letter to her father, remarking, "He writes sadly enough, I think."

"I really do not see what you have to fret about," said Mrs. Acland, looking scornfully at Marjory's tearful eyes. "Is it not a bit of your usual perversity, my dear?"

"I suppose it is," with defiant indifference.

"You have letters too, my love?" asked Mr. Acland, not averse to change the subject.

"Only one of those endless coal circulars," she returned, tearing it up as she spoke, "and one from Miss Clements, who is at Florence. She says she made the acquaintance there, last winter, of a Mr. and Mrs. Carteret, who are some connections of yours."

"Carteret?" repeated Mr. Acland. "No, not of mine. There was an uncle of Marjory's mother so called, but I have not heard of him for years."

"Marjory's mother!" thought her daughter bitterly; "does he forget she was his wife, or is he afraid to mention it?"

"They seem to be people of some importance," resumed Mrs. Acland.

"They are. Carteret has an estate in the south of England; but he had most of his fortune through his mother. He always lives abroad."

"Miss Clements says they talk of returning to England. I think we ought to call on them when they are in town."

"Perhaps so."

"Come, Marjory," said Mrs. Acland sharply to that young person, who was evidently in a reverie, "what are you dreaming about? Pray rouse yourself. Put on your hat and take the children for their morning walk: nurse is very busy just now."

The afternoon of the same day had clouded over, and a breeze from the south-west had brought with it heavy showers.

The omnibuses were crowded with damp passengers and wet umbrellas, while the streets were rapidly converted into spaces of liquid mud, across which splashed pedestrians struggled under the noses of the steaming horses.

Sitting with a book on her knee in the school-room window, gazing at the fast-falling rain, and hearing the dreary splash-splash of the big drops from the balcony of the dining-room above, Marjory fell into a sort of dream, from which she was startled by the sudden sharp closing of the front door, and was languidly interested by seeing Mrs. Acland sally forth, covered from head to foot by a dark shapeless rain-cloak, and further shrouded by a small black straw bonnet and a thick veil. Her skirts had been fastened up high enough to show her neat, well-made boots, which Marjory ruefully admired. She walked rapidly with a firm springy step through the garden, and turned towards the railway station at the end of the road.

"She certainly has nice feet," thought Marjory, putting out one of her own and contemplating it. It was encased in what cheap ready-made shopkeepers term "house slippers," constructed of thick hard leather, which creaked when she moved, and were square, coarse, and disfiguring to the last degree. Marjory's pretty short upper lip curled contemptuously as she looked. She slipped her foot out of its unworthy covering. That was more satisfactory. Her dark grey stocking showed its

proportions, the small heel and high instep. "Mine would look as well if I had nice boots. I wish I could dress as I like. I wish I could look like a lady. Shall I never have any pleasure or pretty things? Shall I always be hidden away and be thankful to keep down here? The worst of it is, I shall grow bad and bitter and ill-mannered with this constant sense of wrong. I will try not to be rough or common. There are *so* many years before me, some happiness must be sprinkled amongst them; and then I am not ugly; no, I am sure I am not." She looked quickly round to see if a little glass which belonged to the pantry had by chance been left in the room. It had not. "I am a conceited goose;" and she smiled at herself. "I suppose Mrs. Acland is going to buy some wonderful bargain. Perhaps to Leadenhall Market. Nothing else would take her out in such weather. She is a strange woman: I believe if she made up her mind to be queen of England she would manage it somehow. I will not think of her any more;" and Marjory applied herself to her book, an old volume of Bourienne's "*Life of Napoleon*," through which she was struggling with a view to keep up her French.

Mrs. Acland kept on her way, however, though she was not bound for Leadenhall Market, nor for any tremendous sacrifice in the way of sales.

Arrived at Moorgate Street, she stepped quickly into a cab, and was set down at one of the fine new buildings near the Royal Exchange, where palatial chambers seem to guarantee the solvency of their occupants. She studied the names of the tenants on the black board usually hung within the door, as if unfamiliar with the place, and then ascended to the second floor, where she opened a door at the end of a passage, on the ground-glass panel of which was painted the words, "William Blake, office."

A couple of clerks were writing at high desks, one of whom rose and came forward. "Mr. Blake?" she asked, low and quickly.

"Engaged at present." Mrs. Acland handed him a note. The clerk hesitated a moment, and took it into another room.

He returned almost immediately, and bringing a chair said civilly, "Please sit down for a few minutes."

The minutes were but few; then Mr. Blake, bland, smiling, fresh-coloured, with a flower in his button-hole, came forth exclaiming, "A thousand apologies for making you wait!" and ushered her into his private room.

It was luxuriously furnished. A soft fine Turkey carpet covered the floor; a massive artistic bronze clock adorned the chimney-piece; the solid comfortable chairs were covered with deep-red dull morocco; a huge knee-hole table of dark mahogany, with endless drawers, bureaus, bookcases, all the best and newest

contrivances to facilitate the doing of business and the keeping of its records, had been lavishly provided; a bright fire glowed in a tiled grate of the latest pattern; and on a little table in one of the windows stood a silver tray with a couple of liqueur bottles, some glasses, and an engraved-glass jug full of water.

Blake drew an easy-chair near the table, and placed a glass screen between his visitor and the fire; for the weather, though damp, was not cold.

"I am sorry you have to come out on such a dreadful afternoon," he said with an air of solicitude. "Will you not take off your cloak; it may be damp?"

Mrs. Acland untied and removed her veil without speaking, showing a pale face, eyes bright with some emotion, apparently neither gentle nor pleasant, and a very firmly closed mouth, which gave a different expression to her countenance from what it usually wore.

"You gave very little consideration to what was good or bad for me when you posted a note, addressed in your *own* hand, at an hour when you must know it would reach me at the breakfast-table. Had Mr. Acland come down before me, in all probability he would have opened it, thinking that you could only write to me on a business matter." This was uttered in a suppressed voice, but with intense irritation.

"But," returned Blake, who had resumed his seat in front of his big table, leaning back in his chair and gazing at her with an admiring, half-smiling look, "I also knew the pluck and inventive power of my fair correspondent. Acland is not the man to find out such a woman as you are. Besides, as you chose to be obstinate and give me no chance of an interview, I was obliged, though most reluctantly, to apply pressure. It is absolutely necessary that I should see you—and alone," he added in a changed voice.

"Why?"

"Because I want your help, and you know I have a right to ask it."

"Why?" she repeated, keeping her stern angry eyes fixed on his.

"Because, my dear Judith, if you had not urged your husband to take his money out of my hands and invest it in guaranteed stock and government securities at a miserable percentage, I should not be in my present fix, and *you* would have a better income."

"And be on the brink of ruin, as I suspect *you* are."

"Exactly. You did me a bad turn then; I've been crippled ever since. I expected more faithfulness from you, considering the happy hours we have spent together, and our old relations. By Jove! I am inclined to believe those were the best days of my life." His bold black eyes had a gleam of regret as he spoke.

"Pray do you think you deserve that I should destroy my husband and children for the chance of making *your* fortune?" she asked bitterly.

"Your husband!" with a sneer. "Come now, Ju, you never were as fond of him as you were of me."

"He *is* my husband; our fortunes are identical; and I am no mean ally, as you would have found had you fulfilled your promise to marry me. I should have kept you straight. You would not have thrown away your chances, and wasted your money on rascally companions, as you *have* done, if you had had a decent comfortable home and a helpmate such as *I* could have been."

"Perhaps so—perhaps so," thoughtfully. "And you are deucedly handsome still, Ju!"

She replied by a gesture of disgust, and asked sharply:

"Tell me what you want, and let me go."

"Want? What can I want but money?"

"There seems no lack of money here!" glancing scornfully round.

"No matter. I shall want money badly in a week or two, I am afraid; and remember, besides the ill turn you did me with Acland, for which you owe me something, I hold your acknowledgment for the money I lent you, to make an appearance when you went abroad with old Mother Redmayne, for which I never had a penny of interest."

"Why, that must be eight years ago! I never thought you meant to claim it."

"Nor should I, were I not driven."

"There is nothing in that to disturb *me*. I shall tell Mr. Acland that you advanced me the money as an old friend of Cranston's, and that I understood you had cancelled my acknowledgment. I shall not hesitate to apply to my husband."

"Ay! but that will not do. As you well know, my need of cash must be concealed to the last moment. My only chance of success (and if I succeed I will not trouble you) depends on my keeping up appearances—lulling suspicion."

"How have you got into trouble? I thought you were piling up gold."

"It's not a sort of affair you could understand. I thought I had a splendid opportunity of making a hit in these silver-mine shares—I mean the new 'South American Silver Mines Company'—and as I was short of cash I helped myself to a bigish sum I had access to, with the sincerest wish to benefit my clients *and* myself. These infernal shares went up steadily, till nearly double what I gave for them. Like a fool I waited, thinking the upward tendency would continue. The very next day the tide turned: still every one thought they would recover;

but they have gone down and down. Now one of my clients, a shrewd Scotchman, will arrive from the Cape in about a fortnight, and unless there's some miracle in my favour, I must be out of this before he looks into matters, or an unjust judge might find me permanent lodgings."

All this was said with cynical indifference.

"Then you had better go," remarked Mrs. Acland coldly. "I suppose you have not robbed these people without filling your own pockets?"

"There I have been culpably weak. I so believed in the temporary value of the 'Silver Mines' operation, that I have put nearly every penny I could scrape together on it."

"You are a greater fool than I thought!" contemptuously. "A grain of common sense would show you that inconsiderate daring dishonesty never pays."

"There is no use in preaching now," replied Blake sullenly. "I must have cash enough to float me in the New World until I can turn round; and I count on you for a hundred."

"You might as well ask me for the National Debt."

After some further urging on his side and refusal on hers, Blake rose and, having helped himself to some liqueur, came and stood on the hearth-rug facing her.

"Look here, Ju," he said, still in the same tone, though a savage look came over his face, "you must and shall help me. You can do it if you choose; you are my safest card, and I have the means of revenge in my hands if you refuse."

Mrs. Acland could not grow whiter, but she did not quail. She only raised her eyes to his with so deadly an expression that Blake said:

"Ay! my life would not be worth an hour's purchase if those fine eyes could kill! But you know what I mean!"

"I do." She paused, and her well-gloved hand clenched itself tight as it lay on the table. "You mean, you would show those two letters of mine, which you kept back like a base traitor as you are, to my husband? Well! are you sure that the pleasure of seeing you in the dock might not outweigh the pain of failure and possible disgrace? Possible only!—remember the power I have over my husband? Nor do faults *before* a marriage dissolve it! *Since*, I have been faultless."

"You are a plucky devil," said Blake, eyeing her curiously, "and I would rather have you for a friend than an enemy. I vow to heaven I would not press you if I could help it, but I must have the money."

Mrs. Acland seemed lost in thought. "It is almost impossible for me to obtain such a sum without raising Mr. Acland's suspicions," she said; "still, *if* you will hand me over those letters, having first let me read and examine them—no more sealed packets, given with the assurance that they contain all I had ever

written, for me—I will endeavour to get you the money, or the greater part of it. How long can you give me?"

"Ten days at the outside. As to the letters, you shall have them when you hand over the cash. I never wished to harm you, Judith: I only kept those letters as a measure of precaution; for you are a dangerous customer. Now I am going to bid a long farewell to England, home and beauty. The letters are of more value to you than to me. When you bring me the money, you will look on me for the last time. My career will have closed on this side the Atlantic."

"That, at least, is an assurance worth paying for."

"Well, Ju, there was a time when I little thought I should ever hear you say that."

"Yes! I look back with amazement when I remember how I loved and believed in you; when you seemed to me the embodiment of all that was elegant and well-bred—*you!*" She laughed bitterly, and Blake shifted his position somewhat uneasily. "Well, my experience was limited; I had not many opportunities of 'seeing life' in the little back sitting-room of my mother's lodging-house. *You* dragged me down low enough; still I suspect I was a better woman, really, in those days than I am now, with the halo of respectability and faultless living round my matronly head." She laughed again. "You see, however, I rose above the level at which you intended to keep me."

"Come, come, be just! I was always ready to give you a lift."

"Do you call your successful plot to marry me to a beggarly artist a lift?" she asked, her voice for once rising to an angry pitch. "Do you call persuading me that he was heir to a vast estate, with but one aged life between him and fortune—do you call *that* a lift?"

"I vow to God I believed it myself! How could I tell that a sickly youngster would recover and grow up to manhood?"

"Ah! what a life I had with Cranston! How he bored me! how soon he grew to mistrust me! Then *you* compromised me, and he deserted his big stupid lumbering boy and myself. Fate was merciful, however——"

"Ay! I thought it was a good riddance for you, when I got the letter from that queer pal of his, Brand, announcing his death in the wreck of the Mississippi steamer?"

"He left a doubtful blessing behind. That boy is a great drag upon me."

"Does Acland object to him?"

"No! but *I* do. He is always in silent opposition to me. He is costly, and he is provokingly like his father."

"Why do you worry yourself so much about money? Acland is well off."

"His position is improving, but I feel bound to be careful. Mr. Acland has the life interest of his first wife's fortune, which

reverts to Marjory and George, and I am determined to make the income it yields pay all expenses for some years to come. I am a tolerable manager!"

"That I am sure! Moreover, I would lay long odds that Miss Marjory does not benefit much by your expenditure."

"Marjory has been my enemy from the first. George was reasonable. I can get on with him; but it is war to the knife between Marjory and myself—an antagonism of nature! She has a most rebellious spirit, *but* I will break it."

"I'd back you for holding your own with any one."

"I am staying too long," exclaimed Mrs. Acland, starting up. "I wonder I can talk to you calmly, as I do, after your driving such a cruel bargain! However, the hope that it will be our last transaction buoys me up. Tell some one to call a cab for me: I ought to have left before."

Blake looked at her and hesitated. Finally he opened the door into the office, and spoke to some one without.

"Tell me how I can communicate with you safely?" he asked, coming back to the fireplace. "I protest I would rather *not* injure you, but where my own safety is concerned——"

"Pray do not apologize. I neither ask nor give quarter," she interrupted.

"Well, before we part give me my instructions."

She thought a moment. "Send me some circular—the announcement of a sale of women's finery; put Cranston's initials in the left corner of first page, and dot with your pen the letters and figures which will spell the address where I can find you. I can then open such a letter in the face of every one. You have given me a desperate task."

Here a clerk came in to say a cab was waiting below.

"Come this way," said Blake, walking to a second door which opened directly into the passage. "Of course I shall keep dark in London until the first heat of pursuit is over. No place like the big city for cover. I wish, Judith, you did not take my very natural measures for self-preservation in so unfriendly a spirit," he added.

"Let us not waste words," she returned sternly. "You have acted after your kind. My position will not allow me to resist your extortion; but it is the last blackmail you shall ever levy on me. Should you reappear on English ground and attempt to molest me, I will accept defeat, destruction, rather than hold any terms with you." She passed him without heeding his eager remonstrance, and went forth with a steady stately step.

"I almost wish I had stuck to her," murmured Blake as he went back to his seat and his task of tearing up dangerous documents.

CHAPTER V.

A FAMILY AFFAIR.

MR. ACLAND was by no means either a hard-hearted or an ill-disposed man, nor was he offensively selfish. He had not vigour enough, mental or physical, to love or to hate strongly. His highest ambition was to be eminently respectable; his highest idea of happiness a quiet life, undisturbed by any necessity for difficult decisions, unruffled by small contradictions, unvexed by household disorder, and, without personal effort of any kind, to look upon the smooth surface of his home and surroundings with exulting pride.

All this his second wife's firm, able management enabled him to enjoy. Moreover, though fairly liberal, he was nervous about expenditure, especially since certain investments had proved failures. Here Mrs. Acland's clear head and financial ability finally riveted the chains which bound him to her. The monthly settling of accounts, on which she insisted, became a positive source of enjoyment, leaving behind it a delicious sense of security, of freedom from all need of personal supervision or responsibility. No wonder, then, that against spells so potent poor Marjory's intermittent and ill-directed efforts to attract her father's approving notice, to suggest her willingness to love and serve him, were worse than useless; they were an infinite bore.

Marjory's irrepressible vivacity, her alternate self-assertion and repentance, irritated him, and, with a little judicious cultivation on the part of Mrs. Acland, established a deep impression in his mind that she was more than his crumpled rose-leaf; she was a cruel thorn, the one speck of rust on the brightness of his lot.

Marjory's long banishment at school, her somewhat trying position there as pupil-teacher for the last two years, was the outcome of her father's conviction that she was hopelessly intractable, and really too much for his dear wife's peace. For his own comfort and happiness his wife was so essential that Mr. Acland was ready, perhaps unconsciously, to sacrifice both sons and daughters. He was, however, indolently fond of their two pretty children, who were always so well dressed and a credit to him, pleasant playthings of whom he never saw too much.

As to George, he was inoffensive; but Mrs. Acland was quite right in urging that, now they had four children to provide for, the cost of preparing for so poor a profession as the Navy was too much to expend on one.

Perhaps of all the young creatures his roof sheltered Dick Cranston was the one he liked best. The boy was so composed and silent, so steady in his attention to a business for which he had no special aptitude, that Mr. Acland began to look forward to his being of real use and saving him trouble in the future.

In appearance Mr. Acland was gentlemanlike and good-looking, always well dressed, and possessing an air of thoughtful wisdom, the result of a disinclination to talk much or to commit himself on any subject, which greatly impressed clients.

His business, a steady remunerative though not very large one, he inherited from his father; but on losing the money above mentioned he took his head clerk, who had saved up a decent sum, into partnership; thus, though senior in years, Mr. Cross was junior in the firm.

Among her many admirable qualities Mrs. Acland possessed excellent health. It was an extraordinary event when a severe headache compelled her to remain in bed the morning after this interview, and poor Mr. Acland appeared disconsolate at the breakfast-table, feeling keenly his utter dependence on his better half.

"Mrs. Acland can only take a cup of tea with one lump of sugar and no milk," said he, as he sat down. "You had better take it up to your mamma, Marjory."

"Sarah can go; I want to attend to you," she returned quickly. Mr. Acland looked vexed, though he made no remark; and having supplied her stepmother's wants, Marjory proceeded to pour out her father's tea, to hand him the toast, and do all the small services she had often jealously watched Mrs. Acland perform. Her eagerness, however, made her awkward. She managed to let drops of liquid fat fall on the snowy tablecloth when helping the bacon, and tumbled the sugar-tongs with a clang against the fender; finally, when her father handed back his cup with a look of disgust, exclaiming, "You need not have put the whole contents of the sugar-box in my tea," and she hastily emptied it into the slop-basin, more went outside than in.

"I wish, my dear, you could learn something of your mamma's handiness and composure; you have really made a horrid mess," observed Mr. Acland with sedate displeasure.

"If I were let to do something for you sometimes," cried Marjory, colouring crimson, "I should not be so nervous."

"Nervous! nonsense! what is there to be nervous about? You are not afraid of me?"

"Yes," she exclaimed with a sudden impulse such as often impelled her to rashness, "I *am* afraid of your not loving me as much as I should like—as I want you to love me!"

Dick, who sat opposite, gazed at her surprised.

"You have no right to accuse me of deficient natural affection, Marjory. I think I have done my duty by you conscientiously."

"Oh! I want a great deal more than duty. I want you to love me, and like to have me with you, as you do Mrs. Acland."

"This is a very improper way of talking; I cannot listen to it. When you are more reasonable and dutiful to the admirable mother whom I have seen fit to give you as a guide, philosopher, and the rest of it, then I shall be only too happy to let you pour

out my tea, especially if you will not be so reckless—I must say reckless.” Looking at the clock, “Dear me! it is almost nine. I must start, and I have had next to no breakfast,” in an aggrieved tone. He rose and left the room. Marjory sat still, a dull defeated feeling holding her back from offering to help her father with his coat.

Silence reigned for a few minutes, till they heard the front door shut; then, in an evil hour for himself, Dick, who, for a wonder, stayed behind his stepfather, said, “It’s no use, Marjory: the more you try, the more you don’t succeed!”

“I see that!” she cried, turning round on him, her eyes flashing through the tears his words arrested; “and you are a heartless creature to tell me so brutally.”

“But I did not mean it in unkindness,” he exclaimed earnestly, coming over and standing beside her. “Don’t you see I am desperately sorry for you?”

“I do not want you to pity me; I hate being pitied.”

“You must not be so unreasonable, Marge! You know I would do—well, *anything* to help you. I can’t bear to see you beating yourself to death against your bars; and it is not all pity. I like your pluck; but I wish you would listen to me, and take my advice.”

“I am too impatient, I know, but I do not see that you are any wiser than I am. Oh! Dick, Dick, I am so miserable!”

“I do not know that I am any wiser, but I am cooler, and I am not *you*. Try not to be so miserable; it takes the heart out of a creature like you!”

“How am I to avoid it?” asked Marjory, starting up from the table and throwing herself into one of the regulation armchairs which stood right and left of the fireplace.

“By not wasting your strength struggling for what you cannot get. It seems rather harsh to say it, but you have lost your father, and, what is more, you’ll never find him again. My mother will take care of that. Just make up your mind to let him go, and you will take one weapon out of her hands.”

“You are cruel! Boys have no heart!” murmured Marjory, looking at him with surprise.

“Well, *you* have too much for your own comfort. I know what it is to feel miserable, I can tell you. I remember, when I was a little chap, how I used to want to climb on my mother’s knee and put my arms round her neck, and how she used to drive me away as if I were a noxious beast. I doubt if anything that ever happens to me in the years to come will wring my heart as that did.”

“Horrid woman! I am not a bit surprised to hear it!” cried Marjory sympathetically. “How could you care for her?”

“I hardened, of course, in time: she can’t move me much now. Indeed, I have been rather unlucky. I do not think any one ever

cared a rap about me till George took to me at school. You know I was not exactly what is called 'attractive' when I came into this house."

"Don't!" said Marjory with a gesture of entreaty.

A soft pleasant smile stole over Dick Cranston's handsome face as he continued, "Just follow my example, Marge: don't waste your affections on your father; if he does not care for you, he doesn't deserve them. You need not be undutiful, of course. And take my advice, try and get out of the house; you will never have a happy moment in it."

"That is true, Dick; but where can I go?"

"Girls often make their own living," said Dick thoughtfully; "you are rather young yet, but in another year——"

"Just consider how ignorant and untrained I am! My going to school was a mockery. I have read about a lot of things, but I *know* nothing thoroughly—no music, no drawing, though I could play if I had been taught! If I 'go out,' it must be as a housemaid or a shop-girl;" the tears, brimmed over, hanging on the remarkably long lashes which veiled her bright eyes. "I am a lady, and I want always to be a lady," she added with a half-suppressed sob.

"You will always be what your own conduct makes you," said Dick gravely. This axiom was rather too exalted for Marge, who dried her eyes in silence. "If you would like to learn a little Latin," he suggested, "I think I could teach you in the evenings."

"Latin? oh! I never could manage it; and it is too late," said Marjory despairingly.

"Well, I must be off, for I am too late already. Keep up your heart, Marge."

"I will," stoutly. "I will go and take one of the Waverley novels from the drawing-room, and read all day to get out of myself. I will not do a single thing for any one."

"Don't," said Dick. The parlour-maid, thinking it high time the breakfast was cleared away, entered at that moment, and their conversation was at an end.

The look-out was dark enough, yet the confidential talk with Dick had relieved and cheered her. She was not alone in the house while Dick was there. Moreover, the picture his words had conjured up, when he described his childish efforts to win a caress from his mother, diverted her from the contemplation of her own wrongs and sorrows. She was so sorry she had ever deepened the shadows of his gloomy boyhood by her whimsical, unreasonable dislike and disdain. As to his advice about her father, she would certainly take it. Why should she care for a parent who was always ready to turn against her? But this doughty resolution was often broken in the ensuing months. It was hard to give up her own father, whom she longed to love, and it took many a rebuff, many an instance of cowardly compliance with his wife's

steady repression of her obnoxious stepdaughter, before Marjory was steeled into the indifference she fancied she could attain by one effort of will.

The week following was marked by a domestic festival which Mrs. Acland always punctiliously observed.

The birthdays of her two younger children occurred within a day or two of each other, though there was over a year between them; so both were celebrated together.

On the present occasion the anniversary chosen falling upon a Saturday, it was decided that the feast should be held at luncheon-time, to enable Mr. Cross, who was the little girl's godfather, to be present without interfering with his usual habit of spending Saturday afternoon and Sunday out of town—the sole recreation he allowed himself.

As it was the business half-holiday, and for appearance sake, Dick was bidden to present himself, the household generally put on a gala appearance.

The proud mother had provided an excellent and tempting repast, a cake of superb dimensions, and a table on which was a goodly array of presents. The children, in white frocks much trimmed with lace, wide blue sashes, and elaborately curled hair, were duly admired and kissed. The boy, who had attained the advanced age of five—a fine little fellow, strikingly like Mrs. Acland—though drilled into a certain amount of company manners, was a violent, self-willed child, a good deal indulged by his mother. He was very solemn, and kept his eyes steadily fixed on the cake. His sister, a gentle, tractable little creature, came in hugging a rag doll, which Marjory had dressed with care and ingenuity as a present for her little pupil, of whom she was rather fond, in spite of her relationship to the detested step-mother.

"What have you got there, Louise?" asked Mrs. Acland, as the young lady, having been assisted into her chair by the parlour-maid, objected to part with her precious dolly.

"It's my new dolly, that Marge gave me; such a dear dolly!"

"Very nice indeed!" said Mrs. Acland blandly. "Very good of you, Marjory, I am sure. And Herbert?—is he not equally favoured?"

"I did not know how to make anything for a boy," she returned.

Under cover of the bustle of helping the children and directing the under-nurse, who was assisting to wait, Mrs. Acland whispered to Mr. Cross, who with a deaf old lady, their next-door neighbour, were the only additions to the family party:

"I am so glad to welcome any little sign of friendliness on Marjory's part! She has been a terrible difficulty. She still detests my precious Herbert because he is so like *me*! But

I trust time and patience may win her to a better frame of mind."

Mr. Cross bowed assent, and glanced with a sense of bewilderment at Marjory's bright young face, which was just then smiling at Louise's efforts to adjust her napkin.

The luncheon ran through the usual course; the viands were done justice to; the health of the little hero and heroine of the day was proposed in very stumbling periods by Mr. Cross and repeated, by her particular request, to the deaf lady by Dick Cranston, who grew very red under the eyes of the company; the children were injudiciously crammed in spite of "mamma's" remonstrances; and then they adjourned to the drawing-room. Here Herbert, no doubt irritated by indigestion, quickly got into a quarrel with his sister. Marjory interfered to separate them, and an outbreak of screams and fury was imminent when Mrs. Acland swooped down on the aggressor, and with large indefinite promises lured him to the nursery.

During her absence the deaf lady cross-examined Marjory as to the pictures and ornaments in the room; as to her own age, her school, her acquirements—whether she had or had not passed an Oxford or Cambridge examination, and many other topics. The gentlemen stood together in one of the windows, and Mr. Cross looked furtively at his watch.

"Oh! by the way," he said suddenly, "Rivers, the accountant, came in just after you left, and told me there is a report that Blake, the stockbroker, has disappeared, having made away with a lot of money. It seems he has forged cheques, bills, and I do not know what. I trust you are safe out of his hands?"

"Is it possible?" said Mr. Acland in a somewhat awe-struck tone. "I thought he was perfectly sound. This must surely be a false rumour. However, thank God! it cannot touch me; I have had nothing to do with him for the last two years. It is a curious fact, Cross, that Mrs. Acland always had a great distrust of Blake, though we kept on terms of civility because he had been a companion and friend of the late Mr. Cranston; not, I imagine (between ourselves), that this intimacy was any great recommendation to Blake. I fear Mrs. Acland's first experience of married life was anything but——"

He was interrupted by the approach of the smart parlour-maid, who presented a salver on which lay a card.

"'Vincent Brand,'" read Mr. Acland, taking it and looking interrogatively at the servant.

"Gentleman, sir, asked for Mrs. Acland."

"A gentleman?"

"Yes, sir—I think."

"Show him up, and take the card to your mistress. I fancy I have heard the name," continued Mr. Acland to his partner; "a former acquaintance of my wife."

As he spoke "Mr. Brand" was announced. Thereupon entered a tall, thin, haggard-looking man, with a short grizzled beard, thick moustaches, and a pair of smiling, sleepy, dark eyes. His hair was thin on the temples and greyer than his beard, and his figure looked younger than his face. He was rather peculiarly dressed in loose trousers, a brown velveteen coat with many pockets, and a soft brown felt hat, which he carried not ungracefully in his long, shapely, pallid, ungloved hand.

"I fear my visit is ill-timed," he said, bowing with an easy air; "but being in London for a few days, I thought perhaps Mrs. Acland might possibly like to see an old acquaintance and give me a few minutes' interview. I presume I have the pleasure of speaking to Mr. Acland?"

His voice was pleasant and well-bred. Mr. Acland bowed; but before he could reply Mrs. Acland came in, holding the card which had been sent to her. Marjory, whose attention had been riveted on the stranger, looked earnestly at her step-mother, with instinctive curiosity to see how she would receive him, and was struck by the swift expression of terror and hatred which gleamed in her eyes, which she instantly closed, while she grasped the top of a high chair near her. The next moment she regained her composure by what Marjory felt rather than perceived was a supreme effort, and, smiling a rather ghastly smile, said, with a kind of gasp:

"This is most unexpected, Mr. Brand."

"It is; perhaps too unexpected," he said in an altered tone. "I ought to have remembered the—the painful associations——"

He broke off suddenly, and, looking straight into her eyes, resumed:

"My excuse is that I shall only be a couple of days in town, and thought you might possibly care to hear some particulars——" he paused.

"No," said Mrs. Acland slowly, and gazing at him as if fascinated, "no; it is useless to open the cruel wounds that are now closing."

Brand bowed. Mrs. Acland moved forward and sank rather than sat down on the sofa, while the deaf lady, who had gone into the back drawing-room to examine a photograph of her hostess, asked loudly and generally:

"Pray who is the gentleman? Some foreigner, I suppose?"

Mr. Cross considerably joined her, and started a question of current news to occupy her attention.

"Let me introduce you to Mr. Acland," said his wife, who had not yet quite recovered her composure.

"Most happy to make his acquaintance. I have already introduced myself," returned Brand.

"Have you not been in England since——" Mrs. Acland paused.

"Since the deplorable accident which cost *me* the best of

comrades and you a husband," he put in gravely. "No," drawing a chair beside her, "this is my first appearance on British soil since I was spared, and a better fellow than myself taken. Of course I was anxious to see you and poor Cranston's boy. I need not say how pleased I am to see you happily settled"—a smile and slight bow to Mrs. Acland, who was looking puzzled and ill at ease—"and surrounded by a charming family, when I remember the past, which was far less agreeable."

"So little agreeable that I would rather not speak of it," said Mrs. Acland haughtily.

"Certainly not, if such is your wish. Is this little fair-haired angel your daughter?" he continued.

"She is." Brand stroked the child's curls with a kindly touch.

"And that tall youngster?" he resumed, looking earnestly at Dick.

"Is my eldest son."

"Ah!" cried Brand, starting up. "Shake hands, young sir, for your father's sake. We were old friends, and saw rough and smooth together. Why, you have grown like—not him so much as his father."

"Did you know my grandfather, too?" asked Dick, colouring and smiling under his searching eyes.

"Stay! that is your father's expression, I *think*," cried Brand, not answering Dick's question. "What are you doing—going in for art?"

"No; Mr. Acland has been so good as to take me into his office."

"Ah! that is better. The legal quill brings more certain supplies of filthy lucre than the artist's pencil, and, believe me, respectability pays. Put on respectability, my son! You see," he continued, laughing, to Mr. Acland, "I have been too long a rolling-stone, as you know, my dear Mrs. Acland; and I shall go on rolling till I topple over into the great abyss."

Mr. Acland stared at him, puzzled and annoyed.

"Without respectability life is little worth," he said precisely, "especially in England."

"That I well know. Am I not a naturalized Englishman? I have long since perceived that your very peccadilloes have a flavour of 'Church and State' about them, lending dignity even to scrapes. But I see, my dear sir, that you have taste as well as the *sine quâ non* respectability. That is a very good picture—that landscape at the end of the room. It looks like L——'s style."

"It *is* an L——," returned Mr. Acland with some pride.

On this text Brand talked for a few minutes very pleasantly, with an air of well-bred deference towards the "man of the house."

All this time Mrs. Acland sat motionless, with an air of forced

composure. Marjory watched the scene with keen interest, feeling attracted by Brand's playful manner, his pleasant voice and easy grace. There was something underlying the incident of his appearance which suggested a mystery to her.

Meanwhile Brand again addressed Dick, "Do you remember your father?"

"Very indistinctly. I think I recollect his taking me on his knee; but I must have been almost a baby. I did not see much of him, I fancy."

"Not much. You saw quite as much of me. Can you remember *me* at all?" looking full at him.

"I cannot say I do; yet there is something familiar in your voice. I seem to have heard it before."

"Ah! my voice dwells in your memory." He was silent for an instant; then, looking at Marjory, he asked, "And this young lady?"

"Is my stepdaughter," replied Mrs. Acland.

"Your stepdaughter? This completes the magic circle of your delightful surroundings. And what a lucky young fellow you are"—to Dick—"to have so charming a sister." He looked kindly at her, and added with a slight change of tone, "I have to congratulate you on being under the gentle judicious rule of so wise, so good, so disinterested a lady as your stepmother. Now," turning to Mr. Acland, "I have intruded long enough. I am well aware I cannot be a favoured guest, and I have satisfied myself on certain points; to-morrow evening or next day I start for Vienna, if I do not change my mind;" and drawing out a pocket-book, from which he took a card, he handed it to Mrs. Acland. "If you care to honour me with any commission, leather work, *bric-à-brac*, &c., I am at your disposal; there is my address."

Mrs. Acland took the card mechanically. Brand bowed, then crossed to where Dick stood, and saying "For your father's sake," shook hands with him cordially. Again bowing to the company, he left the room, followed by Mr. Acland.

"I do not think that gentleman a very desirable acquaintance," he said on his return from seeing him safe off the premises.

"By no means," echoed Mrs. Acland. "He was an associate I always dreaded for Mr. Cranston. Pray tell the servants never to admit him." She spoke with an evident effort. "His visit has upset me; it has revived most painful memories. I must beg you to excuse me, Mrs. Merton. I will go to my room."

She rose and went to the door, but before reaching it wavered and stretched out her hand as if for support. Dick quickly put his arm round her; but with a gesture of repulsion she said harshly, "I do not want you," and steadying herself, she walked slowly from the room. A dead silence fell on all present; then the visitors quickly departed.

The young people, left together (for Mr. Acland went, as in duty bound, to attend to his wife), looked at each other for a few minutes in silence. Then Dick exclaimed, as if speaking out of his thoughts, "I cannot tell what I remember about that man, but there *is* something familiar to me in his voice and eyes."

"I like him!" cried Marjory decidedly. "He gives me the idea of a good villain."

"A good villain! what a rum idea!" returned Dick. "Come, Marge, it is a beautiful day, and there is no one to worry us. Let us take a walk to Hampstead."

CHAPTER VI.

DICK MAKES UP HIS MIND.

THE unexpected visit of his father's former comrade made a strong impression on Dick Cranston's mind or imagination. It was like a light suddenly flashing through the misty veil which time had dropped over the past, bringing out the vanished pictures as colours grow upon the sight when the lamps are lit behind a transparency.

He brooded over the memories thus awakened, and felt almost angry with their disappointing imperfections. Something in Brand's voice and manner seemed to him mixed up with his early childhood—something important and painful, though he could not recall what it was. He had an odd restless desire to see and talk to the wanderer once more. Dick Cranston was given to long silent fits of thought; not reveries or rambling day-dreams, but distinct reflection, reasoning out subjects step by step; or, if he did look forward, framing his future on certain possibilities which gave something of solidity to his youthful imaginings.

Since Marjory had deigned to adopt him, he had grown much more communicative, and was a remarkably attentive listener when Marjory was in a good temper and talkative; but this was not every day, or rather every evening.

Sometimes her presence was commanded in the dining or the drawing room, but not often. In the fine spring evenings, too, they had occasionally slipped out to take a walk. This, however, when made known to Mrs. Acland, was strictly forbidden, unless indeed her consent was first asked and granted. This very simple source of pleasure was therefore almost dried up, as neither son nor stepdaughter cared to ask for anything they could do without. In short, there could scarcely have been a more barren or monotonous existence than that to which these two young creatures were condemned; yet the divine vitality of youth defied the pressure of outward circumstances, and both in after-years could look back to hours spent together in the freedom of the bare sordid schoolroom as happy—even very happy.

"There! I think that looks better," said Marjory, in one of these peaceful intervals a few days after Brand's visit. She had been busy putting the room to rights, and had gathered quite a respectable supply of flowers from the refuse of a splendid basket full sent to Mrs. Acland by one of her husband's country clients.

Dick did not reply; he was studying a thick law-book, bound forbiddingly in calf. "Did you hear, Dick?" repeated Marjory resting her hand and duster on the table.

"Yes; what is it?" looking up wearily.

"Have I not made the place look nice?" She pointed to the bowl of flowers in the middle of the table.

"You have indeed," leaning back in his chair and pushing his book away.

"I wish I could live always in a pretty sweet room opening into a conservatory, with pleasure-grounds and a park beyond," said Marjory, shaking her duster out of the window and folding it up, then drawing a chair to the table opposite to her companion.

"And I wish I hadn't anything to do with law," cried Dick; "I cannot stand it. I would rather carry a hod."

"What is that?" asked Marjory.

"A kind of open box to hold bricks or mortar: labourers carry them up to the bricklayers when they are building a house."

"That must be horrid. If you hate law so much, why do you not tell my father, and try something else?"

"If I thought it would not cost him money or trouble, I'd tell him; but I have been a burden long enough already."

"It strikes me, Dick," said Marjory critically, leaning her elbows on the table and resting her chin between the palms of her hands—"it strikes me that you have not much spirit."

"I dare say I have not," returned Dick, laughing good-humouredly and showing his strong white teeth. "I always think it is better to obey honestly till you feel strong enough to judge and act for yourself. Obedience is nobler and wiser than self-will, and I know that if I ever come to command others I'll take care they obey implicitly."

"It's a babyish sort of thing, though, to be so ready to obey, at least for a young man, and you are quite big enough to be considered a young man."

"Oh, I am, am I? Thank you."

"How old are you, Dick?"

"I was nineteen in December, I believe."

"You are just two years and a month older than I am. Who would think it!"

"Why?—do I seem younger?"

"I am sure I feel much older. Then girls are always older than boys; in fact, we leave you behind!"

"Yes!" returned Dick, quietly, drawing the detested book to him. "Then they stop, and we go on."

"Do you mean to say we are stupid—that *you* have more brains?"

"I do not know. I have not seen much of girls. I feel somehow that they are different; they cannot do the things boys do, though they may be clever in their own way. Now there is yourself; you dart at things wonderfully, and you are often right, but you couldn't plod."

"I should think not," contemptuously.

"Plodding is very useful, I can tell you; but quick-tempered people cannot plod."

"Am I quick-tempered, pray?"

"Well, rather! I can always tell, by the way you mend my socks, the mood you are in. Now last week you were cross, and you sewed up a hole just over the heel into a lump. It rubbed a sore place before I got to the office. When you are *not* cross, you do them so nicely and even, and——"

"You are an ungrateful, disagreeable boy," cried Marjory, reddening and sitting up stiffly, "when I treat you as if you were a whole instead of a half brother!—as if you were George himself."

"No, not quite," put in Dick. There was a pause, Marjory looking indignantly at her companion; presently her face softened. "Did it hurt you very much, Dick?"

"Oh! I could endure it without crying out!" he said with a smile.

"Dick! you are positively beginning to give yourself airs."

No answer. Dick was again trying to read.

"I have been thinking of what you said about my going out as a governess," resumed Marjory meditatively, and once more resting her chin on her hands. "Your mother would be happy then, when we were both—George and I—sent clear away, and she had my father to herself."

"I suspect she would; and then she would get rid of me. But, Marjory, I never advised you to go out as a governess. I said you would be better out of the house. I did not think how it was to be managed: any way, some fellow will marry you one of these days."

"That's not likely," said Marjory, still reflectively. "I have no money."

"Oh! plenty of girls marry without having money. Then some people would think you pretty."

"Indeed!" with pique. "That is as much as to say, you do *not*."

Dick looked at her critically for an instant, and replied very deliberately, "You are not a beauty, but you look pretty enough now and then; at least I have thought so, since you have been kind and nice."

"I don't suppose you know or care whether a girl is pretty or ugly," contemptuously.

"Perhaps not," returned Dick with a smile.

Marjory flashed a scornful glance at him in vain, for he had fixed his eyes on the page before him.

Marjory was silent for a minute or two, and then burst forth: "Oh! don't let us be cross and disagreeable! It is a lovely evening; let us take a long walk. My father and Mrs. Acland have gone out to dinner, we will say nothing to them; but if Mrs. A. does hear, I am ready to stand a scolding."

"So am I," cried Dick, starting up, and shutting his book with a bang. "Law is too much for me: I think I must tell Mr. Acland it is no use, and he had better let me go and seek my fortune."

"I should, if I were you," returned Marjory as she left the room to get her hat.

Dick's desire for change, however, was to be brought about by an agency far different from what he would have anticipated, and, as is not unfrequently the case, what seemed a sore trial served to fulfil his most earnest wish.

Mr. Acland's mind had been troubled for the last fortnight or three weeks by the pallid looks and depressed air of his incomparable wife. Her appetite, too, was indifferent, and Mr. Acland had urged her more than once to consult an eminent physician, if only to relieve his mind.

This she gently refused to do. "I have no great faith in doctors," she said, "and I understand myself. The truth is, I have sustained a shock to my nervous system. The sudden appearance of that man, Brand, revived all the painful memories of my former life. He was one of the worst companions my unfortunate husband had, and was, I imagine, the confidant of his intention to desert me; at any rate, they were travelling together in America when the accident, through which Mr. Cranston lost his life, occurred. Ah! how terrible *my* life has been until I found rest and security with a true gentleman;" and she laid her hand caressingly on her husband's.

"Whose earnest effort will always be to promote your happiness, my love," returned Mr. Acland, touched and flattered. "I must say I was pleased to see you look more like yourself last night at our friend's little dinner; and a very good dinner it was. We must ask Mr. and Mrs. Berry here, as soon as you feel equal to the fatigue of entertaining. Suppose you try a little change. A week or ten days at Brighton or Hastings might set you up. You could take nurse and the children, and——"

"And leave you alone, to be fidgeted into a nervous fever by Marjory's awkwardness!" interrupted Mrs. Acland, smiling tenderly upon him. "No, no! I will not stir without you. Besides, I do not think we are justified in incurring the cost of such an expedition, when we shall have to take the whole family to the seaside in August."

"Ah! I am not deterred by that consideration," said Mr. Acland

cheerfully. "I have had a somewhat unexpected windfall. A man who was bankrupt a couple of years ago, and to whom I had done some service, has paid the debt he owed me this morning. I had never attempted to recover it, as it was not due to the firm. I shall therefore place it to my private account."

"That is very nice! I feel sure, dear, you do many kind acts of which no one hears," interrupted the lady. "However, the drawing-room begins to look terribly shabby, and I have set my heart on a really good Turkey carpet—if you think you can afford it."

A pleasant discussion ensued, and it was arranged that Mrs. Acland should call for her husband the following day at his office, and go with him to a well-known emporium to choose a suitable carpet, which, as Mrs. Acland observed, would wear well to the last.

Mr. Acland looked forward to this appointment with placid pleasure, equivalent probably to the sense of comfort and security which incites a petted pussy to purr. Mrs. Acland was always a credit to him, always sure to choose wisely, to keep the middle course between parsimony and extravagance. He even thought of treating her to luncheon at Pim's (the carpet warehouse was in the City), as she was to be at the office about one o'clock.

His gallant intentions were, however, frustrated by an urgent request to meet the opposing solicitor in a complicated case for the purpose of discussing the terms of a compromise. This necessitated the performance of some business he had intended transacting in the afternoon, at the time when he hoped to await his wife; and his arrangements for the day were completely upset.

Mrs. Acland was a little surprised, then, to find him awaiting her at Moorgate Street Station, where she alighted.

"I am glad you are a little before your time," he said, noticing her careful, simple, but handsome outdoor costume and distinguished look with satisfaction. "I am greatly annoyed at being obliged to break my engagement with you;" and he briefly explained, adding, "I shall not be detained for more than half an hour, and I will meet you at Dickson's."

"That will do very well," returned Mrs. Acland complaisantly. "I can wait for you there."

"Meantime, you can save me returning all the way to the office," continued Mr. Acland as they ascended the long stair leading to the exit, "if you will bring me a paper, endorsed 'Abstract of Fleming's title.' It is lying on some documents tied together, in the middle division of my safe. Here are my keys. This long one opens the safe: if it is stiff, get Dick to help you; he is writing in my room to-day."

"Very well!" said Mrs. Acland, taking the keys.

"And you had better put the paper into an envelope. You will find some in the right-hand top drawer of my table. I

was so put out by this summons, I quite forgot it,—a thing I rarely do.”

“I will be careful,” she said. “Good-bye for the present.”

“Take a cab down to Chichester Court,” urged her husband.

“I would prefer walking; it is quicker and safer.” She smiled and left him.

The office of Messrs. Acland and Cross was near the Metropolitan Station. Though Mrs. Acland rarely visited it, she knew her way; and, passing the clerks’ or general room, tapped at a door that was inscribed “Private.”

It was immediately opened by Dick Cranston, who evidently expected her. “Did you meet Mr. Acland?” he asked.

“I did.” She seated herself, and drawing a small fan from her pocket waved it languidly, as if fatigued.

Dick resumed his writing. “Mr. Acland told me to bring him a paper from the safe. Which safe?—I see two,” asked his mother.

“It must be the small one; I think he keeps his own papers in that.” Mrs. Acland rose, and attempted to unlock it.

“I wish you would turn the key; it is very stiff.”

Dick came to her assistance. “It needs more knack than strength.”

“I should fancy you had more of the last than the first,” she said, with a light touch of scorn, as she opened the heavy door and looked at the neatly arranged letters and papers almost filling the receptacle. Dick stood by her for half a second, and then went back in silence to his seat, which faced in an opposite direction.

“There is the paper! Certainly Mr. Acland is the most methodical of men,” exclaimed his mother, closing and locking the safe. “I hope, Dick, you will profit by his example.” She walked to the large knee-hole table, and selected an envelope as directed.

“I am not particularly untidy,” said Dick; “I am far more orderly than George.” His mother did not reply, but presently came and placed the packet before him. “Address that to Mr. Acland,” she said; “I might possibly drop it.”

Dick obeyed in silence, and looking up saw his mother leaning back in a huge armchair which stood beside the fire-place. He rose and brought her the little parcel.

“Are you not well?” he asked, struck by her pallid, exhausted look.

“No; I am rarely quite well. I have these sudden terrible palpitations.” She pressed her hand to her side, while she gazed at him with a peculiar resentful expression, her light blue eyes darkening and dilating with some strong feeling. “How could any woman’s nerves or health stand the strain my life with your father put on them?—poverty, uncertainty, suspicion, desertion!

And what comfort have *you* been to me?—always opposing me; never helping me in any way! You are,” vindictively, “a reproduction of your father, with a strain of obstinacy even *he* had not.”

“I am,” said Dick, standing before her, his eyes on hers with a stern look of righteous wrath—“I am what your want of love has made me. Have you ever tried to give joy or comfort to the life I never asked you to bestow?”

Mother and son gazed at each other for a moment of terrible silence, all the antagonism of their natures flashing forth undisguised; but her eyes at last sank under his.

“I should be better and happier if I were not under the same roof with you,” said Dick, steadily. “I have long wished to go out into the world and strive for myself. I do not fear the result; I can labour with my hands if need be. Your unconcealed dislike, which you never expressed so distinctly before, has decided me. I will speak to Mr. Acland to-night; I will no longer be a burden to you or to him.”

“Do as you choose,” she returned, coldly; “you are, no doubt, like your father, averse to steady application, and will become as useless a wanderer as he was.”

Dick made no reply, and his mother left the room without a glance or a sign of relenting.

The young man threw himself into the chair she had just quitted, and burying his head in his hands remained quite still, except for a movement of his shoulders suggestive of sobs. It was a bitter moment. He had long known that his mother was indifferent to him; but that she absolutely hated him was a cruel revelation, and she did not hesitate to avow it with appalling animosity. Why, the most worthless fellows—boys that pilfered and lied, and robbed their benefactors, ay, and ill-treated their mothers—were loved by the very parents they injured! In gaol, on the gallows, many a criminal's mother stuck to him to the last! What had *he* done that he should be thus divested of friends, relatives, even of a mother's tenderness? He was terribly alone. But this temporary despair of a loving heart passed by. He could be, he thought, sufficient to himself, and it was unmanly to howl over what was inevitable. He could not be so very disagreeable and forbidding after all, or Marjory would not have got over her strong prejudice against him.

Now that George was gone, the only creature he would regret under his mother's roof was Marjory. How impatient and stinging she could be! But when she *was* kind she seemed to draw the heart out of you and warm it against her own.

“Many a chap,” thought Dick, pulling himself together with an effort—“many a chap has begun lower down a good bit than me, and got up pretty far; why shouldn't I?”

He rose and walked over to his desk.

"At any rate," he muttered, "I have done with my mother; she shall never move me or hurt me again."

And his pen was soon travelling steadily though not rapidly over the paper, proving that "Richard was himself again."

Meantime Mrs. Acland walked, not rapidly, to meet her husband. She had not come unharmed out of the angry scene with her son. Her face was set, and her eyes still dark with vindictive dislike. Air and motion, however, helped her to recover herself; so Mr. Acland found her calm, smiling, and speaking with just the right degree of politeness to an attentive shopman.

"There is your paper, my love," she said, handing it to him. "I made Dick address it; just see that it is right."

"Yes, quite right," said Mr. Acland, looking at it. "You were not likely to make a mistake."

Then husband and wife threw themselves into the pleasant task of choosing among the harmonious colours and charming designs of the abundant stores exhibited. Taste and cost pulled in opposite directions, as usual. But Mr. Acland was in a liberal mood, and the right article was finally fixed upon in time to allow of his keeping his afternoon appointment punctually.

"I will put you into a cab before we part," he said; "you will want your luncheon by the time you get back."

"I shall not refuse a cab this time," replied Mrs. Acland, taking his arm and leaning heavily upon it. "The truth is, I have been a little upset. When I went into your room I found Dick idling and drawing ridiculous things, so I spoke to him rather sharply about the bad return he made to you after all your kindness. He replied most unbecomingly, in fact in a perfectly savage manner, so I left him."

"I am sorry to hear it. I must say, though Dick is slow, I never find him idle. I shall, however, certainly reprove him."

"No, no, pray do not! It will only make bad blood between us. Let us trust to time and kindness. I hope to bring him and Marjory, whose estrangement I deplore, to reason and right thinking by patience and justice."

"You are generally right. But here is a four-wheeler: you like a four-wheeler best?"

"Yes, thank you!"

She was about to step in, when Mr. Acland exclaimed:

"Oh! by-the-bye, give me my keys."

Mrs. Acland paused, thrust her hand into her pocket and withdrew, while a look of dismay came over her face.

"My dear, I am shocked and ashamed! I must have left them on your table when I went to find the envelope. Can you forgive me? I was so vexed and worried by Dick's rudeness, that I never thought of anything save getting away from him. I had better go back for them at once."

"No, no, by no means. No one will be let into my room

while I am away, and probably no one will see them until I return."

"Well, pray *do* return as soon as you can! It is not well to leave them about even when Dick is there. Boys are curious; and then we must remember his poor father's propensities. Oh! I am so sorry, dear!"

"Never mind. Pray get in: it is beginning to rain."

Dick Cranston was unusually silent and preoccupied that evening; he did not even seem to hear Marjory when she spoke to him; nor did he demolish a pile of bread and butter, as was his wont at tea. As soon as he thought dinner was over he went away upstairs, and Marjory had time to forget his absence in an absorbing story which enlivened the pages of the "Family Herald," lent to her by the friendly cook.

Presently he came back, and stood looking wistfully, thoughtfully, out of the window, with his hands in his coat-pockets.

"Where have you been, Dick?" asked Marjory, roused to curiosity by his long-continued silence.

"I have been speaking to your father," he said, returning to his usual seat, and leaning his elbow on the table, rumpling his hair as he rested his head on one hand. "I have been telling him I will not go on at the office any longer; that I want to maintain myself in my own way, without troubling him or my—mother."

"And what did he say?" asked Marjory eagerly.

"Oh! nothing very distinct; something about waiting, and not knowing my own mind—just what my mother has put into his head; but that is all nonsense. I never could leave at a more suitable time. I have finished a lot of copying, and there's a new fellow just apprenticed, who will fill my place; so my loss will be a gain."

"Then you really mean to go?—when?"

"I most certainly mean it. If it were not for respect to Mr. Acland, I should go to-night."

"But, Dick, have you any money?"

"Yes, a few shillings."

"What will become of you if you do not find something to do?"

"I shall find something to do; I am not afraid!" A long pause, during which Marjory struggled hard against an inclination to cry.

"I shall be awfully lonely when you are gone; I shall not have a friend in the house, except cook."

"Yes, I am afraid you will be very lonely," returned Dick, looking at her kindly. "But I can't help going, Marge. I feel I would rather walk away into my grave, than stay in the house with my mother. She spoke to me this morning as if my

existence was an unpardonable offence. If I see her every day I shall end by hating her; and, cruel as she is, I don't want to feel like that."

"I am sure I am not a bit surprised if you do!" cried Marjory, with heartiest sympathy. "Why, she makes us *all* miserable. How I wish I could go away too!"

"You cannot, though," said Dick thoughtfully; "you are such a slight young thing! How could *you* fight with the world?"

"I do a good bit of fighting here, only I am always beaten," replied Marjory, ruefully.

"Still, you are in your proper place under your father's roof—the place you have a right to. Now I have no rightful place, till I make one for myself."

"How shall you make it, Dick—by carrying a thing like what you described on your shoulder?"

"Yes, if need be."

"Oh! how I wish George were here!" cried Marjory. "It is too bad to lose you both!" The big tears welled over and hung upon her eyelashes.

"Don't lose heart, Marge! By-and-by, when George and I get on, perhaps we might set up together, and you could come and keep house for us."

"It would be heavenly!" said Marjory, clasping her hands with delight at so glorious a prospect. "I would go to market and manage everything. I love being in the kitchen! But," her face changing, "if poor George is to be always at sea, he will not want a house or a housekeeper."

"Well, anyhow, let us hope for the best," said Dick, rising. "I am going to look over my belongings; I will take very little with me. But I have some books that were my father's; I'll sell them to-morrow, and get a few more shillings to keep me going till I find employment. I wonder if my father really *was* so bad a fellow as my mother makes out!"

"I am sure it was *her* fault if he was," said Marjory, stoutly.

"I don't know. She makes *your* father a capital wife."

He opened the door slowly, as if expecting Marjory to speak; but Marjory was thinking of the delicious possibility of keeping house for the boys; so Dick disappeared for the evening.

(To be continued.)

WE ARE ONE.

BY ETHEL MARRYAT.

COME, balmy hours, that bring the end of day ;
Come, soothing hours, that herald peace and rest ;
Ah ! would I could your fleeting sweetness stay,
That gives to me all that my heart loves best.

Come, fragrant hours, that spread your welcome dew
O'er all the sun-scorched, heavy-laden earth—
Sweet restful fancies are inborn of you,
And from your dreamy stillness love takes birth.

Come with your tender shades of mellow light,
That shed a welcome shadow o'er the land ;
Your darkling gloom—the presage of the night—
Brings rest for weary brains and toil-stained hand.

And with you come, as gifts more precious yet,
Of which sweet sounds and shades are but a part,
The thoughts that in the day we must forget,
Or else, perchance, must stifle in our heart—

The love that lives as truly yet in thought
As in the days when it walked at our side,
Remembrance of the joy so dearly bought—
All these return and live at eventide.

The church bell tinkling in the vale beyond,
Rings not more clearly on the evening air
Than on my heart thy whispers low and fond,
Thy kisses sweet, thy touch upon my hair.

The gentle murm'rings, borne upon the wind,
That stir the leaves—the sound of far-off feet—
All these but bring thee near to heart and mind,
And in one glad communion spirits meet.

Come to me, love ! speak to me once again—
Thy soul is with me, though thy form unseen.
In these still hours I lose all sense of pain ;
I live in, not what is, but what has been.

Ah, no ! What is and must be till the end,
Till life is over, and its sad course run,
Thank God ! that in these hours our spirits blend ;
Thank God ! that in the twilight we are one.

THE SORROWS OF UGLY MEN.

By A. GALLENGA.

"I will not hang thee for thy face,
Poor devil that thou art."

SUCH are the first lines addressed to the "Portrait of a Gentleman," at the Boston Academy Exhibition, by Mr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, in a small volume of half-humorous, half-sentimental poems published in his early Harvard days.

The impulse was natural; and the thought would equally occur to any of us on coming into the presence of an object of art, or, for that matter, a work of nature, instinctively calling forth our aversion, yet for the ill-look of which we should not well know whom to blame. The features are coarse, no doubt; the expression is repulsive. It is undeniably a plain countenance, positively ugly. But, somehow, if we are charitably inclined, the American poet's merciful conclusion will suggest itself—that the "poor devil" did not paint and did not make his own face; that it was given him at his birth; and that, such as it is, it is his hard fate to carry it to his grave.

Even so, we have all our likes and dislikes. Hatred at first sight springs up as spontaneously in our hearts as love at first sight: it is an instinct, an innate, ever-ready weapon of self-defence, which we have in common with our dumb fellow-creatures. A human infant will make up to its mother's pet blood-hound as to its most trusted friend. A new-born kitten will chafe and spit and fly with outstretched claws at the same inoffensive favourite as at the well-known hereditary foe of his race. We are all born physiognomists. Faces are to us open books in which those who are least taught perhaps best know how to read. Physiognomy is a sure enough guide so long as it is relied upon merely as an intuitive faculty, and until it is tampered with by vain attempts to reduce it to fixed scientific principles. We cannot analyze sympathies and antipathies.

"The reason why, I cannot tell;
But I don't like thee, Doctor Fell,"

is, in that respect, the beginning and end of all our philosophy.

Yet it is in some sense true, as modern physiology tells us, that from the cradle to the tomb we are every one of us more or less

consciously working out our own countenances. All our emotions and sensations, our habits and occupations, keep up a constant play on our facial muscles, incessantly though almost imperceptibly contracting and relaxing them, drawing lines and leaving marks upon them, which deepen and harden with time so as gradually to affect their general expression, in harmony with every act of the mind and every impulse of the heart that modify our character.

And by an analogous mode of reasoning we are taught that the bones of our skull, and consequently our facial angles, are from tenderest age impressed by the action of the brain, and this in its turn is influenced by the development of our mental organs, each and all of them determining, not only the general formation, but also every minute protuberance and depression of the skull itself.

In the outward structure of the head, and in the cast of the countenance, we have, therefore, something like an index of a man's inner nature. Phrenology and physiognomy proceed hand in hand, and with such good effect that some of the most advanced Socialists would have no hesitation about the possibility of applying the theories of Gall, Spurzheim, and Lavater to their Utopian scheme of state organization, suggesting that the Government should assign to every man the place which the bumps in his head and the wrinkles in his face might, from the outset of his career, seem best to fit and entitle him to fill in the community, and leaving it for the teacher or ruler to establish who among the young citizens of the Republican gymnasium is growing up to be a senator and who a street-sweeper.

The hollowness of these doctrines lies in this, that while the mind is never at rest, and its moods are perpetually changing, the impressions the body receives have a tendency to become permanent; for muscles must necessarily stiffen and bones harden, and whatever turn time and circumstances may give to our thoughts and feelings at every successive stage of our existence, the furrows in the face and the knobs in the head will naturally retain in later life not a little of the shape and frame they received in their earliest development. The instincts and faculties of a child, like the bends and knots of a sapling, may, to some extent, be controlled and corrected in primitive youth; but the man, like the tree, hastens to rid himself of the mere shackles of artificial culture. Individual disposition soon asserts itself, and the changes in the outward shapes can no longer keep pace with the ever-shifting tendencies of irrepressible nature. The image of the soul which shone so tersely through the features of ingenuous youth fades and vanishes, blurred by the thickening layers of the mask of advancing, scheming, and designing age.

Thus we are told of Socrates that, in answer to some of his friends, puzzled by the contrast between his inner and outer man, he declared that nature in his case was by no means at fault;

that his original mind and heart were in reality as ugly as his face, that the germs of evil propensities, the roots of all loathsome vices, had been hard at work to corrupt his soul in his early days, and it was only by the utmost effort of reason and the strongest exercise of constraint and discipline, that he had ceased to be the hideous monster he once *was*, and he perhaps still *looked*.

That the ugliest of us may not be as bad as we seem ought, perhaps, to be some consolation; and we may hope never to stand before a judge so prejudiced as to "hang us for our faces," were they even as hideous as the very worst men shudder at in Madame Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors. But ugliness, even if it be not our fault, is at any rate our sore affliction; and we suffer no less from the consciousness of what may pass for "a plain," "an odd," or "a peculiar face," than for what must be allowed to be an "absolutely villainous countenance."

Walter Scott, the most benevolent of men, confessed that he "hated" poor Ugo Foscolo for various reasons, but first because he was "ugly as a baboon." And the luckless Italian poet himself was so sensitive on the subject, that when one of his good-natured friends observed sympathetically, "*Vous êtes bien laid, monsieur!*" he scowled savagely and answered, "*Oui, monsieur, à faire peur!*"

It is easy to say that our faces should be no concern of ours, inasmuch as we can never actually see them, never need look at them even in the glass, unless it be when shaving—an operation in which no man can look his best, and with which, perhaps for that reason, it is now-a-days the fashion for many sensible men to dispense.

But alas! every man sees his neighbour's face; and we make out at the first glance what we think of each other's looks, and few of us are at the pains to dissemble how shocked or, what is worse, how amused we are at the deformities or oddities of an unfortunate visage. And there is no lack of candid friends, like Foscolo's Frenchman, allowing themselves critical or sympathetic, but, at all events, uncalled-for, impertinent remarks to remind us of what we know too well, and what everybody should perceive we cannot help.

Another objection Sir Walter Scott had against poor Foscolo was that his Italian *bête noire* was "intolerably conceited;" and it is by no means unlikely that, like other ugly men, the Italian, aware of his inability to conceal his ugliness, had ended by being proud of it; that he thought a countenance debarred from any chance of being lovable might as well aspire to be formidable. He valued it, perhaps, as Mirabeau did his *hure*, or "boar's head," or as so many do value at the present day the bristling Victor Emanuel mustachios, the Lincoln *goatee*, and other variety of hirsute, satyr-like hairy appendages, as if afraid of their smooth faces not being sufficiently hideous.

The fact is, there is no end to the thought we males take about our personal appearance. We may well be told that lofty genius, uncommon energy, sincere piety, ardent charity, or the combination of these and other mental and moral qualities in a transcendent degree, will give the plainest countenance a super-human expression independent of all freshness and richness of complexion and harmony of faultless features. By a strange perverseness of our frail nature it would seem that no men are more susceptible on the subject of mere physical imperfections than those on whom nature was lavish of intellectual gifts. Every artist has not, like Raphael, an angel's face to be transferred to his canvas as the ideal of heavenly loveliness; but all of them appear in their likenesses to have, or to give themselves, good looks of their own. There is, seemingly, among them a Narcissus-like fondness for their own faces, which prompts them to gaze upon and cherish them as much as they do those of their wives, models, or mistresses, reproducing them as their conception of that *Beautiful*, which, like the charity of certain Christians, may extend to all creation, but "begins at home."

That an artist's portrait, by his own hand, must be "flattered" may be taken for granted; for in the glass all of us can, and we generally manage to, see our best; and a photographer, if he is master of his craft, will always contrive to produce a true and yet also a pleasing likeness. For every human face, however plain, must have its good side, and it is in the nature of a kind mirror or of a clever artist, so to manage his light as to give prominence to our good points and cast the worst into the shade.

And as it is the case with painters and sculptors, so likewise it seldom happens that poets like Shelley, composers like Bellini, singers like Mario, orators like Castelar, or others whose success in their calling brings them into public notice, are, so to say, disinherited by Providence, that is, denied those good looks which are to the mind what the front of a house should be to the plan of its interior.

It was not by his face, but by his club-foot, that poor Byron was made to feel that misery which found its vent in his "Deformed Transformed." It was by his sunken chest and round shoulders that poor Leopardi was driven to shun men's intercourse and to despair of women's love. Wherever genius is, we expect to recognize it at a glance; and we are hardly ever disappointed. But it is seldom that a man's confidence in his powers is so great as to overcome his consciousness of a deficiency of that comely "frontispiece on which the first impression of the book depends." It is not every man that can, like the famous tenor, Niccola Tacchinardi, step up to the stage-lights amidst the storm of hooting and hissing that on his first appearance at the Scala Theatre the mere sight of his Æsop-like shape called forth, and wait impatiently till the uproar of the menagerie subsided, then say

quietly, "Ladies and gentlemen, I am here to be heard, not seen" ("*Son venuto per farmi sentire, non per farmi vedere*"), which at once won him a thunder of applause.

Mere irregularity of feature, it seems, is apt to be more grievous to a man's heart (though it appeals less generally to the kindly feelings of his fellow-beings) than even deformity of figure. Witness the illustrious author of "*Vanity Fair*," who set a peaceful literary club by the ears and brought it to the desperate measure of a dissolution as the only means of ousting an obnoxious member—a poor wight, after all, guilty of no greater offence than allowing himself in print a few silly but not very ill-natured jokes at the expense of the nose of the great novelist, humourist, and satirist—a luckless nose, which its owner averred, and probably believed, had come into the world with just and fair proportions, and without a blemish, but had been flattened in early age by the blow of a school-mate at play. It was the same accident which, he knew, had befallen the old Florentine sculptor, Michael Angelo Buonarroti, and it was that coincidence which prompted the Englishman to couple the Italian's Christian name with Titmarsh in his choice of a literary alias.

And if I might allow myself the liberty of taking a paragraph out of the columns of a society paper, "*The World*," I could give an equally pertinent instance of the exceeding sensitiveness of the *irritable genus* as to personal appearance exhibited by another eminent *homme de lettres*, but one still living and flourishing, who, as we learn from "*Atlas*," when entering with an humbler brother of the pen into a royal marble hall thronged with the *élite* of a nation's rank and beauty, was addressed by his companion in a half-audible whisper with the following ingenuous remark—"I say, my friend! meseemeth we two are the only ugly persons here;" whereupon the other disengaged his arm, and answered drily, "Speak for yourself, sir!"

With all that, however, I am not sure that we men might not easily be reconciled to our faces such as our dear mothers provided us with, were it not that we have to reckon with the other and the more interesting half of our kind. Women have at all times been allowed the monopoly of beauty; they are the "fair sex" by right, and we all sing, with old Anacreon, that "a bull's strength lies in his horns, and a steed's in his hoofs, but a woman's charms are the weapons wherewith she scatters embattled hosts and batters down castle walls." It would be pedantry to go back to the mischief wrought by Helen of Troy, or to speculate "how history might have had to be written, had Cleopatra's nose been barely one-eighth of an inch longer or shorter than it was." The gipsy-queen might have made play with eyes and lips, she might have called up all the flitting hues, the lights and shades of her rich dusky complexion, but even she would vainly have tried to add to, or to take away from, her perfect Grecian central feature:

for the nose, sirs, is a dumb, stubborn, jealous organ, not to be tampered with with impunity. And we have not forgotten the severe admonition of the elder Rothschild to that young fop of Israel who sank his Levy into Grant, to whom the old man said, "You may change your name, but you *can't* change your nose."

Apart from the magnetic glamour which makes the sexes necessary to each other's happiness, and taking merely an artistic or æsthetic view of the subject, it would not be easy to decide on which side of the progeny of Adam and Eve lies the preponderance of beauty. All that we can say is that men are more utterly enslaved by female loveliness, and more willing to pay a high price for its possession. But natural selection is not for all that less strong on the other side. It would be absurd to believe that a girl has no preference for a partner for a waltz, or at a wedding, merely because she says so, and must wait till she is asked. The poor thing has too often to take Hobson's choice. In resigning herself to her lot in life she may be swayed by a variety of the most generous or of the basest considerations. There may be cases of Beauty and the Beast, of Desdemona and Othello, or of Emma Trotter and Lord Methuselah. John Wilkes, who neither was nor fancied himself an Adonis, was confident that in the pursuit of no matter what Venus the handsomest man in England "had but half an hour's start of him." And, no doubt, so thought Vulcan also, and verily he had his reward. No doubt, mental and moral qualities, a good deal of small talk, a little impudence, opportunity and importunity, may all have weight on a fine woman's mind. But the eye must first be won; and not only half an hour, but sometimes a mere glance often decides her. And not only is she herself in some instances "hard to please," but she will also consider how others may be pleased. "What do you think of him?" asked a sprightly damsel of a married woman, her bosom-friend, to whom she had just introduced her betrothed. "Why, my dear," answered the matron, "did you not *look at him*?" And that one word put an end to the intended match at once and for ever. Well might Hermia and Lysander, in "*Midsummer Night's Dream*," lament the curse of "standing on the choice of friends" or "choosing love by another's eye."

But, independently of the favour mere good looks may win us from man or woman, we feel that it is for our own sake that we do attach great importance to the advantage of a decent personal appearance. We may care little for a handsome, but most of us care for a *distingué* look. Whatever opinion we may hold about Darwin's theory of the origin of the species, we cannot fail to recognize in the "human face divine" the evidence of our kindred with the humbler tribe of the brute creation. Screen with one hand the upper part of a man's forehead, and with the other his mouth and chin, and you will see in the brows, the eyes, the

nose, the cheek-bones, &c., something to remind you of the semblance of the lion or the eagle, the blood-hound, the rat, the ferret, the monkey, or donkey; and the skill of a Landseer, and a few of his school, consists especially in giving our dumb favourites the expression of human thoughts and feelings with such intenseness as "almost to make them speak."

And again, whether or not we accept the legend of the common derivation of mankind from the three members of one and the same family, we cannot help drawing a line somewhere between the white and the black, the yellow and the copper-red tribes, assigning to them different degrees of their mental and moral qualities, and of their aptitude to yield to the influence of gradual refinement. "Impossible," men say, "even for Pears' soap to wash a negro white."

Hence our instinctive pride of race. A gentleman in our estimation, and as to mere outward seeming, is he who exhibits most distinctly in his countenance and person the certain marks of his lion or eagle nature. It is he whose complexion bears the most irrefragable witness to his purity of blood. A lofty crest, a broad forehead, a straight or Grecian, aquiline or Roman nose, a firm mouth, an oval face, with light hair and grey or blue eyes and fair skin, constitute in the northern land of Europe, or at least in England, what is considered genuine Caucasian beauty. It is accepted as the mark of old and honourable aristocratic descent, notwithstanding the admixture of extraneous blood in every family usually occurring at every new generation by intermarriage, notwithstanding the various considerations, financial, religious, political or other, which may here and there determine the parties in the arrangement even of a "heaven-made" matrimonial alliance, and also notwithstanding the strange phenomena to which impulse of feeling, aberration of taste, and mischance of all sorts are apt to give rise now and then even in the best regulated households.

But it is precisely because, as a rule, nature is true to herself, because in the ordinary and legitimate course of things the peculiar cast of countenance and figure is perpetuated from father to son through many generations, and because unfortunately to this and any other rule frequent and flagrant exceptions may be seen, that we do not expect to find doves or daws in eagles' nests; that we reckon on a man of a certain rank and lineage to be recognizable by the exterior of a *hidalgo*, as the Spaniards have it—a somebody's son, a gentleman; and that we are shocked and disgusted when with all his names and titles, his dress and equipage, and all his belongings—"with all the blood of all the Howards"—and merely judging from his outward presence, we are forced to proclaim that he *looks* like a nobody.

Well may the poet sing :

"No rustic garb can e'er have power to hide
The stately beauty of a noble face ;
Through th' humblest toil we still the royal pride
Of innate Majesty can surely trace." *

A princess of Antioch or a queen of France may still be recognized as a grand lady, though milking the cows or churning butter in a mountain peasant's garb ; but so can also a beggar's daughter in royal robes grace a King Cophetua's throne. Social ranks can without any great effort exchange parts in a novel, on the stage, or a fancy ball. But this is not the test by which we look on the realities of every-day life. It is not that we are surprised if we meet an earl in his carriage, a mere scarecrow in comparison with any of the tall flunkies poised on the footboard behind him ; or if we are ushered into a duchess's presence by a *soubrette* infinitely prettier than her mistress ; but we are pleased to insist that, with all that, "blood is not water." We contend that the advantages of birth and breeding, of rearing and nurturing, ought to confer that look of distinction, that seal and stamp of race, which should under all circumstances enable us to make out the master from the man, the maid from the lady.

And it is upon this conviction, founded on a rule which is of course by no means universal, that, however indifferent we may be to men or women's opinion of our feature or form, we are most painfully sensitive to any visible doubt or hesitation on their part to acknowledge our titles to a superior air, to a look of gentility. "I may be as ugly as you please," we are ready to allow, "but I have brains ; I have feelings of honour and truth ; above all things, I have blood in my veins ; I am a gentleman ; and that you ought to perceive at a glance without being told."

But alas ! there are no worse blind than those who do not care to see. We live in too great a hurry, and have to make our way through too large a crowd, to notice whom we are hustling, and to cultivate our discerning powers so as to find out the genuine article and beware of the mere counterfeit. We trust the guinea stamp, and accept all that shines as real gold. Very amusing it is sometimes to see into what blunders those fall whom long experience should put on their guard, or whose position should require them to have eyes in their heads and to know "who is who."

Take the instance of that "sprightly damsel" who, as I said, was swayed by a friend's judgment of her lover's exterior to break off an engagement into which she had entered with her eyes wide open, and whom the fear of "what *the world* would say" thus

* "Non copre abito vil la Nobil luce
E quanto è in lei d' altero e di gentile,
E fuor la maestà regia traluce,
Per gli atti ancor dell' esercizio umile." —
Tasso, "*Gerusalemme Liberata*," canto vii., st. 18.

doomed to a life of single blessedness. She is well born, well off, and well connected, with good looks and talents and taste and tact ; she has travelled, and never moved in any but the best social circles, among people not free from some slight prejudice against what they call the "middle classes."

Well, this lady drove one morning, with her maid, to the Euston Station just in time for the first fast train to the north. She was known to the guard, who most obsequiously showed her to the corner seat in his best and least crowded carriage, and handed in her things, hand-bag, wrappers and parasol, only leaving her with a bow when he had done all his utmost to make her thoroughly comfortable.

The lady, however, had not forgotten her maid, a gawky German lass lately imported, unused to English speech and London ways ; seeing her jostled here and there, helpless and dismayed, the kind mistress stepped down from her seat, and, taking hold of the girl's arm, hurried her to her place in the second class. The bell rang at that moment, and the lady, aware that there was no time to lose, was making the best of her way to her own compartment, in her haste perhaps forgetting that stately goddess-like gait for which she was praised among men and envied among women, and breaking into a mincing trot ; she was fairly running when a porter threw himself into her way, waving her back with a warning :

"I say, where are you going ? That is *first-class*."

The lady was perplexed, but for a moment only. The next, she slipped between the man and the train, quietly answering, "Just so ; I am all right."

The stupid man perceived his mistake, ran after, and was barely in time to shut the door after her, with a muttered, "Beg pardon, mum, I'm sure—didn't see—didn't know——"

"Oh, yes ! you saw very well," said the lady, cutting him short and throwing herself back into her seat ; "but it is all right."

There was nothing very extraordinary in the incident, and it was only in the lady's own way of telling it that it could seem in any manner amusing. But the mere fact that she never lost an opportunity of returning to it, rehearsing the whole scene, and dwelling on its minute details with her incomparable mimicry, proves how great an impression was made by that little trumpery adventure ; how the slight wound to her *amour propre*, which was immediately forgiven, rankled, nevertheless, unforgotten ; and how, in spite of her consciousness of her inner worth, and of the undeniable outward signs by which her good face, her fine figure, her plain but neat travelling dress and rich furs made her rank conspicuous, the question, "What could the poor man have taken her for ?" had never found in her mind a satisfactory answer.

But a far more striking evidence of the obtuseness evinced in their estimate of the quality of the persons they have to deal with,

especially by those bound by reason of their calling or occupation to "know better," occurred in the case of Sir James Jolliffe, lately her Majesty's ambassador at Timbuctoo.

He had arrived early in the forenoon, after travelling all night across the Continent, and, leaving all his impediments at the London Bridge Station, he drove in a hansom alone with a small bag to Vantiny's, then a well-known first-rate hotel, not a hundred miles from Waterloo Place.

Sir James was a distinguished man, be it borne in mind, and looked every inch what he was. He came home after several years' absence, during which his services had won him golden opinions both with the great men in Downing Street and with the Court to which he was accredited, where he had worked hand in hand with the foremost statesman of the age in the accomplishment of the independence and unity of that country. Sir James was a remarkably good-looking man, tall, fair and portly, with a good-natured but stately—some people even said almost royal—mien, and the very best style of an Englishman and a gentleman. But he had travelled day and night. It was June, very warm weather, and he wore the loose jacket, the broad-brimmed, soft, white felt hat that he had on when he set out; he carried his red cotton umbrella, and had, no doubt, the appearance of one long used to the unbraced and unstarched ways of the dwellers in southern climates. He alighted, threw his bag to the porter, and stepping up to the *maitre d'hotel*, who was just up and met him in the hall, announced his desire to put up at his house for several weeks. The landlord, M. Vantiny, a French-Swiss, took a brief survey of the new-comer, and, with a scant bow, bade a waiter take up the gentleman's luggage, adding laconically, in his own language, "*Numero cent et un.*"

No. 101 was on the fourth floor; it was not a large room, not sumptuously furnished; indeed, neither better nor worse than might have been deemed suitable to a gentleman's gentleman. The ambassador made a tour of inspection round the apartment, threw open the window, lifted up his umbrella to the low ceiling, examined the bed, and turned to the waiter who was staring at him, and who volunteered the information that "the lodging would be charged half-a-crown a night, including the service."

"It is quite reasonable," observed Sir James. "Put down my bag; it is all settled."

Not many minutes later he came down, nodded with a smile to the landlord as he passed him at the door, and went to the Turkish baths in Jermyn Street.

Barely an hour had elapsed when up came to the hotel-door a four-wheeled cab with a pile of luggage and a bustling courier-valet, who was met on the steps and surrounded by a crowd of officious attendants with a chorus of hearty welcome.

"Where have you put his Excellency?" the man asked.

"What Excellency?" answered Vantiny, the landlord, coming forward with an alarmed look, boding evil.

"Why, his Excellency Sir James Jolliffe, the Queen's representative at Timbuctoo, to be sure! Did I not telegraph from Geneva?"

"Yes! yes! sure enough," struck in the clerk from the bureau. "The telegram has been up on the office rack these three days——"

"But as yet his Excellency——," began the landlord; but he stopped short, and then he broke out, giving himself a smart slap in the forehead, "Ah! to be sure, his Excellency in the white hat. How blind I was! What is to be done now? Take up his Excellency's things into the front first floor; send in the chambermaid; have the rooms thoroughly aired. Look smart, will you! His Excellency will soon be back again."

And back again the ambassador was, after not many minutes. He cut short the landlord's lying excuses, pooh-poohed his abject apologies, ordered up his heavy luggage to the fourth floor, bade his valet look out for his own quarters at some decent lodging-house in the neighbourhood; but for himself he declared that "he was fond of air and exercise, and No. 101 best suited him. He was only in town for a month or six weeks, and would give but little trouble." And, "Two and sixpence a night, did you say?" he concluded. "It is a bargain!"

He was as good as his word. Bushels of cards were left at the hotel-door for his Excellency. Neat broughams and dashing hansoms with callers drove up from morning to night. But, "Not in," was the word; "uncertain, *very* uncertain whether he would dine at home on *that* evening," were the stereotyped answers to all inquirers. And for a few days, of course, the ambassador was a guest in Downing Street, in Carlton House Terrace, at Marlborough House, Windsor Castle, and such places. But otherwise he lived all day at his club, the Windham, where he gave snug breakfasts and sumptuous dinners to his friends, not one farthing of which, alas! went to fill the till of the disconsolate Vantiny establishment, where he only slept.

At the end of six weeks his bill for night-lodgings at that almost princely establishment did not exceed the forty-two half-crowns (£5 5s.) he had bargained for.

Sir James never failed to nod affably to his host as he went in and out of the house day after day. He would tarry now and then to exchange a word or two with him as he stepped into the bureau for his cards and letters, and even threw out some hints of his condolence about the dulness of the London season, affected that year by sinister rumours of imminent war on the Continent, involving grievous losses to the old and respectable houses of accommodation, already more than half ruined by the unfair competition of those ugly, noisy, barrack-like caravanserais at the railway stations.

Sir James Jolliffe was the prince of good-natured fellows. It was probably mere caprice, a little bravado about his indifference to the comforts and luxuries men in his rank are slaves to, a wish to *rough* it by way of change—it was all that, no doubt, which caused him to insist on making himself at home in a garret all that time. Still there may also not improbably have been lurking in his heart some Christian wish to return good for evil, some vague desire to heap burning coals on the head of his penitent landlord by giving him and extending to all his brother-victuallers the benefit of a much-needed practical, salutary lesson respecting the folly of trusting to appearances, and not offering to the first-comer the best they have, the best any customer can afford and is willing to pay for. The lesson was well meant, however bitter it might prove to M. Vantiny, the splendid first-floor front of whose hotel remained empty during the whole of the six weeks of Sir James's stay under its roof.

But it is not every man who, under similar circumstances, would have shown so admirable a command over his feelings as that most amiable of English diplomatists. Something very different I happened to witness at the *table d'hôte* of the "Europa," the fine hotel under the porticoes facing the Royal Palace, across the main square (*Piazza Castello*) in Turin.

The Prussian first secretary of legation, Von Riegel, was on that night entertaining a party of young friends from Berlin, travelling for pleasure, and only stopping for two days in town on their way to Rome.

It was, I forget for what reason, a gala dinner at the hotel. The splendid *salle à manger* was lighted up *a giorno*. The landlord was present, with all his waiters in their undertakers' liveries of black coats and white ties; the Germans and Swiss among them being told off to the upper end of the table in attendance upon Von Riegel and his guests, only one of whom had not yet come to muster.

This late arrival was Von Eisenried, a Prussian *pur sang*, a *Yunker* of high rank and higher pretensions, with all the gifts and acquirements that go to enhance the advantages of birth, except a proper knowledge of the world and its ways. There was still, as he came up, a little stir and bustle unavoidable in the setting down of a large and motley company, and the young baron, to whom Von Riegel was beckoning from his place, was threading his way to him, when somebody laid a hand on his sleeve, calling out rather tartly in German:

"But, I say, can't you tell me where I am to sit?"

The *Yunker* drew back, dumb-struck for a moment; but soon recovered from his amazement. He rose to his full height and tossed back his head, saying very stiffly:

"*Nehmen Sie mich für einem Kellner?*" (Do you take me for a waiter?)

"*Ach nein!*" (Oh, no!), stammered the stranger, just glancing at him and perceiving his very natural, not very unfrequent, but not the less unpardonably awkward mistake. And by way of a soothing apology, aggravating the offence, he blurted out: "*Nicht für einem Kellner, mein Herr,—nür für den Oberkellner*" (Not for a waiter, but for the head-waiter).

With this the poor blunderer whisked himself off among the crowd of guests and was soon out of sight. The wrathful Prussian was rushing after him, but at that moment Von Riegel came up with coaxing words, and carried him away almost bodily, promising to stand by him if, after the feast, he was bent on calling on that rude stranger for an explanation.

The dinner was a sumptuous but hardly a comfortable affair. Von Eisenried fidgeted in his seat, sighing deeply, muttering words of vengeance, and scowling at the whole company across the table, unable to single out the offender, yet brooding over the offence, appealing to the right and left for sympathy, and hardly listening to Von Riegel, who strove to pour oil on the troubled waters—a hard task amid the titter in which his other friends and guests were tempted to indulge, and in which he was himself at great pains not to join.

The dinner was over at last, and Von Riegel, hurrying his leaving-taking from the rest of his company, set out followed by Eisenried, hot and eager, in quest of his man. The *Yunker* looked into every face on his way, proceeded to the smoking-room, the reading-room, the robing-room—all in vain. The Prussians had sat at the far end of the table, away from the door. The stranger they wanted either was gone before them, or was not to be recognized.

Von Riegel, with unwearied kindness, took the baffled and still gloomy *Yunker* by the arm, and walked with him to his own rooms at the German Legation, where he plied him with punch and choice havannahs, and put up with the poor man's maunderings, indefatigable in his arguments and remonstrances, urging that the stranger must have been merely a purblind fool, that he had had no time even to look at him, that he was most likely an ill-bred fellow, a *Schwabe*, a raw student, an impudent hagman, a beggarly newspaper correspondent—anyhow, somebody below his contempt, whom no gentleman could dream of calling to account.

All breath thrown away! Von Eisenried listened with deference and seemed for a moment won over; but the next, he heaved his deep sigh and came back to the charge with that appeal which he had so often addressed to all his friend's guests at the table:

"*Sehe ich aus wie ein Oberkellner?*" (Do I look like a head-waiter?)—a question, of course, always met with the hackneyed compliments he was fishing for.

At last poor Von Riegel's patience was at an end; and as the night advanced, he suggested that it began to be time his friend

should resign himself to his disappointment, and understand that *the affront*, however huge it might seem to him, "must needs be pocketed."

With this he rose, took up a *bougie*, and showed the way downstairs, and threw open the door of the Legation, tendering his hand with his good-bye to his parting guest. Eisenried took his friend's hand; but even as he pressed it, the same stubborn sigh swelled his breast, and out once more came the old maudlin and now half-tipsy appeal:

"*Lieber Freund* (dear friend), we are old *camarades*; we are both Germans, both fair men and true. I am sure you will not flatter me, you will be frank with me, won't you? Well, then, now tell me, I beg, *Sehe ich aus wie ein Oberkellner?*" (*Do I look like a head-waiter?*)

Poor Von Riegel could stand it no longer. That song had been dinned into his ears for the last six deadly hours. He now shook off his guest's hand with a hasty "good night," bundled him out of the door, shutting it after him with a bang, and hurried back to his rooms, giving free vent to his long-smothered wrath by a bitter laugh, a roaring laugh, peal on peal, with which the marble vault of the Legation staircase rang again, and all the time heartily ejaculating, "*Der Esel!*" (The ass!)

Such is the way with most of us miserable mortals. Why should not a Swiss head-waiter look like a German baron, or *vice versa*? Is a waiter a dog, an ape, a nigger, a Hottentot? Is it his fault if his master dresses him like a gentleman?—if Democracy has done away with those good old times when "the tailor made the man"?

Vanity of vanities! we respect clothes; we worship bodies; we fancy we can still, in all cases, trace a man's descent from father to son, forsooth, after all the mixture of breeds, the freaks of fortune, and the instincts of natural selection since Adam!

Vanity of vanities! we think so much of this "worthless integument," as Horace Smith has it in his "Address to a Mummy," and care so little about the "undying guest," which we hope is to outlast it beyond the limits of time! And it is hardly any consolation to those of us to whose personal appearance nature has been a stepmother to be told that "Beauty is but skin deep," and that "Handsome is that handsome does."

WAS IT A MISTAKE?

By CURTIS YORKE,

AUTHOR OF "THAT LITTLE GIRL," "A DRAWN GAME," ETC. ETC.

ONE chilly afternoon in February, a very pretty, very determined-looking young woman was standing, dressed for walking, before one of the artistically draped mirrors which adorned a certain cosy drawing-room in South Kensington. She was regarding the very seductive vision which was reflected in the aforesaid mirror with large, serious, seemingly unappreciative eyes. They were lovely eyes, by the way, dark, soft and expressive. Her features were small, and sharply cut; her figure was all a woman's ought to be; her *tout ensemble* was bewitching enough to satisfy the most captious critic of charms feminine. The only other occupant of the room was an elderly lady who sat in an easy-chair near the fire. She was a *real* elderly lady, with a real cap and real grey hair. Usually she wore a real smile too, but it was replaced on this occasion by a distinctly unreal frown.

"You make me feel almost angry, Nina," this lady was saying, with would-be severity, "and your Aunt Lavinia is very much disappointed. You have refused a truly estimable man, a most worthy man, and in a splendid position as far as means go—for no reason whatever, except——"

"Except that I hate him," rejoined the young person addressed as Nina, with vicious emphasis, putting up one daintily gloved hand to adjust the absurd little spotted veil which covered half of her charming face. "I would rather be thrown from the top of St. Paul's, or—or be *boiled alive* than marry Mr. Peter Harding! Ugh! I can scarcely bear even to *dance* with him. I would as soon marry a *toad*! So now, Aunt Jane! If you are tired of me," hotly, "why I——"

"Tut, tut! my dear," said Aunt Jane, "don't be silly. But this is the *fourth* good match you have refused lately, to my certain knowledge," she continued regretfully; "and you know, Nina, you are twenty-five——"

"Twenty-four and a half, dear," gently corrected her niece.

"Well, it's all the same; and your Aunt Lavinia says——"

"That she had fourteen offers before she was sixteen!" interrupted Nina glibly. "One from a marquis, two from millionaires, seven from baronets, and four from large landed proprietors. I

know the list by heart! That she was married before she was seventeen, and was a grandmother at—was it *twenty-eight* or *thirty-eight*, auntie?" she concluded with an air of innocent inquiry.

But Aunt Jane did not laugh. She thought it almost treason to laugh at "Aunt Lavinia," who was her only sister, long since widowed, and who ruled the whole household with a rod of iron—except one member, and that one refractory member was Miss Nina Ferrers, who, being an orphan, had lived with these two aunts, her only relatives in England, since she left school. She disputed Aunt Lavinia's authority vigorously and continuously, and listened with silent scorn to that lady's long-drawn-out tales of the havoc she had made among susceptible male hearts in days gone by.

"Twenty-four!" said Nina, turning away from the mirror, and rolling up her eyes in mock dismay, "and still Nina Ferrers! Terrible! And nearly all my contemporaries have deserted me to join the ranks of the glorious British matrons. And yet—are they any happier than I? Edith Mowbray, for instance; she has diamonds *ad libitum*, the handsomest horses in London—or out of it, *carte blanche* at Worth's and Elise's, and, for anything I know, at Hunt and Roskell's as well. How happy she must be! Her husband is a great bloated *beast*, of course, with two ideas—his dinner and his wine-cellar, especially the latter. But what of that? A mere detail. Nellie Allingham, too, she fell in love with and married the handsomest man it has ever been my lot to behold. She adores him still; and he—well, his *affaires du cœur* are as numerous as ever, perhaps rather more so. Poor Nellie! Annie Dering, too; *she* ought to glide through life on velvet. She is now Lady Cardonnel; her settlements were princely, she is as beautiful as a dream, she has society at her feet, and her entertainments are more sought after than any in town. Of course she is happy. True, they say his lordship ill-uses her brutally in private. They also say she hates him like poison. I know she looks like the ghost of the girl she used to be. But," with a shrug, "what will you? You can't have everything. Poor pretty Mabel, too, who married an old horror with both feet in the grave, and broke her lover's heart—— But I will not particularize further. On looking round the circle of our married acquaintance, I do not think wedded bliss is—to speak paradoxically—conducive to happiness. As a matter of fact, I heartily admire Aunt Lavinia's *bête noire*, Violet Carlin, who ran away from her fat old stockbroker of a bridegroom on her wedding morning, and took wing for the East to nurse our glorious heroes in the Soudan."

"Violet Carlin is going to be married to Captain King, of the Artillery," said Aunt Jane quietly. "Mrs. Laurie told me to-day. I forgot to tell you."

"What, Felix King? I know him. He'll break her heart before six months are over their heads. I thought Violet had more sense. Well, I must go, or it will be dark before I get back."

"Now, my dear," said Aunt Jane, "let me entreat you not to make yourself late. It is *not* safe to be out after dusk. Your Aunt Lavinia says——"

"That villains are lurking at every street corner," said Nina saucily, "for the express purpose of waylaying unprotected females in general and Nina Ferrers in particular. As if a woman of *my* age could not take care of herself! No *lady* is ever insulted now-a-days, so long as she behaves and looks like a lady. Times are changed, darling, since you and Aunt Lavinia were young," she concluded, with an impulsive hug. "Is there anything I can do for you?" she added.

"No, unless you should be in the Strand, and have time to call for your Aunt Lavinia's watch."

Nina's shopping occupied more time than she had calculated upon, and when she left the jeweller's shop mentioned by Aunt Jane—where she had had to wait some little time—it was almost dark, and the lamps were already lighted.

"How provoking!" she thought. "I wanted to go to see that engraving the Romer's were talking of. I might run along yet. I will; and I can take a hansom from there."

No sooner decided than acted upon, and in a few minutes she had reached the printseller's ever-attractive windows. The engraving she sought was not in the windows looking to the Strand; so she turned down Savoy Street, where she became so absorbed, first by the picture she had come to see, and then by several others, that "Big Ben's" deep announcement that it was six o'clock caused her some dismay. As the last stroke boomed through the air, a hansom drove up to the kerb behind her with a noisy rattle, the doors were flung back violently, even for the doors of a hansom, and the next moment Nina felt a grasp on her arm, and heard a man's voice say in shaking tones:

"Oh, my darling—at last!"

With a terrified exclamation she turned quickly, and found herself gazing into the agitated face of a tall, aristocratic-looking man, a total stranger to her. For a moment she stood actually motionless with fright, then wrenched her arm away and darted down the street. This was foolish, for it was now quite dark, and Savoy Street is not a busy thoroughfare. He overtook her in a second, and again his hand grasped her arm.

"What do you mean, sir?" she exclaimed haughtily. "Let me go—*instantly*!"

"Let you go!" he replied in rapid, passionate tones. "Never again—never again." Then more quietly, "Adela, be reasonable. My wife, come home; and I will forgive everything—forget everything!"

"You are most insolent, sir," she returned indignantly. "Let me go at once, or I shall call a policeman." (Why, oh why, she thought, had she disregarded Aunt Jane's injunctions?)

She made a quick rapid movement, but her captor foresaw it, and held her fast.

"No, by Heaven," he said in a fierce undertone, "you shall not escape me again." And so saying, before she could even guess what he was about to do, he had hurried her towards the waiting hansom, lifted her in, and, giving some quick, sharp direction to the driver, took his seat beside her, and closed the doors smartly.

"Police! help! police!" she almost screamed, recovering from her momentary stupefaction, as the horse moved forward. "Police!" she shrieked again, with a wild gasp of hope, as one of the protectors of the "lieges" sauntered up the street. He stopped and turned.

"Ah, let me out!" she cried excitedly. "Quick! help! help!"

One or two passers-by turned, glanced at the group carelessly, then went on their way. The policeman, who with a gesture had stopped the cabman, advanced hastily.

"What is this, sir?" he said in quick authoritative tones, laying his hand on the door.

"This lady is my wife," said Nina's companion haughtily.

"You will oblige me by telling the man to drive on."

"It is not true," shrieked Nina; "I never saw him before. Let me out; let me out!"

"You see? She has been ill," went on the stranger rapidly.

"I see, sir," said the agent of the law, with a sudden access of civility, looking curiously at the struggling girl, and at the same time letting his fingers close on a couple of gold coins. "All right, cabby."

The horse started forward, and Nina was borne swiftly away through the darkness. She screamed and struggled, and strove to push open the doors, even to climb over them; but her companion put his arm round her with an air of proprietorship inexpressibly gentle, but inexpressibly determined too, and said almost sternly, "All this is useless, Adela. You are only paining both yourself and me by this pretence of not knowing me—your own husband."

"Oh, this is insufferable!" she exclaimed passionately. "My name is *not* Adela. I am not married. You *know* I never saw you before. It is cowardly—horrible of you! Oh, what shall I do! what shall I do!" And throwing herself back in the corner, she burst into wild, hysterical sobs. Her companion had partly withdrawn his arm, only leaving it in such a position as would enable him to prevent her escaping.

"Worse than ever!" she heard him mutter under his breath. Then, after a pause, he said indistinctly, "Is the thought of

coming back to me so horrible to you? Are you so hard—so changed, *still*?”

But Nina took no notice, only sobbed more wildly.

“You know you have been ill, darling,” he went on in soothing tones, as though speaking to a sick child. “You are not your own loving self. Everything will be clear to you by-and-by. Ah, my wife! can you not trust yourself to me?”

He was so evidently in earnest, so much under the influence of some almost uncontrollable though strongly suppressed emotion, that Nina looked at him for a moment in incredulous amazement. They were passing by some gaily lighted building, and she saw that his face was white and haggard, his lips under his heavy moustache were quivering painfully; he had the look of a man to whom sleep had long been a stranger.

“I will forget everything, Adela,” he went on in low shaking tones. “The past months shall be as though they had never been. Ah, do not look at me with that horror in your eyes! My wife, have pity; you are breaking my heart!”

Nina was so struck by the passionate earnestness of his manner, by the unmistakable anguish that vibrated in his deep voice, that she checked her sobs and sat up. A new fear took possession of her, and thrilled her very soul. This man was *mad*!—there could be no doubt of it; and she was entirely in his power! For a second or two she sat almost paralyzed. Then even in her sick terror she became suddenly conscious that she must not show him she was afraid of him; so she said as quietly as she could, though her heart was beating like a steam-hammer:

“I think you mistake me for some one else. I——”

“Dear,” he replied with anxious tenderness, “you know, during your illness you—you forgot many things. By-and-by, when you are—quite strong again, you will know—you will understand how terribly your cold words, your averted looks wound me; how——”

His voice faltered; he stopped, and Nina felt that the arm which still half encircled her waist was trembling violently. They were crossing Oxford Street, she noted despairingly. In an incredibly short time they would be at St. Pancras, whither she had a confused recollection of hearing him direct the cabman. *Where* was he going to take her? With the desperation of despair, she rapidly evolved a plan. She would no longer deny that she was his wife, lest he should break into frenzy, and become unmanageable, but humour him until they reached the station. Then surely she would find some one to help her, some means of escape. So rallying all her powers of dissimulation, she looked up at him, and said gently and wonderingly:

“Ah—I have been ill, then? I am better now. But—I seem confused. I—I do not remember——”

“Ah, my darling,” he returned eagerly, “I hoped, I knew,

when I saw your tears, bitter as they were to me, that the clouds that have separated us so long were rolling away from your mind. And now tell me," he went on, evidently controlling his voice with difficulty, "where have you been all these weary days and nights? Had you money? Had you—Heavens! do you know how the thought has maddened me?—how——"

"I will tell you everything—afterwards," she interrupted him hurriedly, noticing the growing excitement in his tone. "Only forgive me. You know I was ill, and—and——"

"Yes, yes, I will forgive everything; I swear it. But ah! little one, why did you harbour such cruel thoughts of me—say such cruel words? Was it that—that you were *jealous*? Forgive me, dear, but your words before—before your illness—they seemed to imply——"

"Yes, yes," she answered hastily, "that was it. I—I was jealous."

"My darling," venturing to hold her a little closer, "of whom? Not—not of Alice, surely?"

"Yes, of Alice," she muttered, trusting she might be forgiven the awful lies she was uttering.

"Oh, Adela!" he went on in a voice which shook, in spite of his apparent efforts to keep it calm and steady, "how *could* you?"

Nina shivered involuntarily, and felt herself a criminal of the deepest dye.

"My wife," he continued, with an inexpressible softening of the voice, "do not start away from me. I will ask you no more questions. No one shall. It shall be as though you had never been away. You will find everything as you left it, except—that Alice has gone. And we will forget, my Adela, that this trouble has ever come between us."

In spite of all her terror and bewilderment, Nina felt strangely touched, and a feeling of deep pity took the place of anger in her heart.

"You will not leave me again, my child?" he said, still with that strong restraint in his tone.

"No—oh, no," Nina hastened to reply, with a duplicity of which an hour ago she would not have deemed herself capable. For uncompromising truthfulness was one of Miss Ferrers' idiosyncrasies in general. But, in dealing with a lunatic, the sternest moralist slackens the chain a little.

"Promise me," he whispered. "Say, 'Geoffrey, I promise.'"

"Geoffrey, I—I promise," she murmured.

"Swear it," he continued hoarsely.

Nina had not contemplated this, but a moment's thought supplied a Jesuitical answer.

"I swear," she said in trembling tones, "that I will never leave my dear husband again."

"Ah, my darling," he breathed, with a sudden tightening of his arm round her.

(Heavens! she thought in terror, was he going to *kiss* her?)

"On one condition," she said calmly, but with a wildly beating heart.

"Yes, darling, anything." But the next moment he bent his head to hers, his moustache brushed her cheek, his lips touched hers.

"Oh, *don't!*" she exclaimed in an agony of shame and terror, putting up her hands to her face.

"Your condition—what is it?" he said unsteadily.

"That you—that you take away your arm." (His arm was instantly removed.) "And that you do not—do not kiss me again—until we get home."

"Is my touch so hateful to you—still?" he said bitterly.

"No, no," Nina hastened to say. "But I—I am nervous, and——"

"True," he interrupted her, "it shall be as you wish."

And throwing himself back in his seat, he covered his eyes with his hand.

"Oh, child," he muttered, "if you *knew* how I have suffered—if you *knew*!"

There was a short silence. They were driving through Gordon Square. A few minutes more and they would be at the station. She felt curiously calm now, and self-reliant. As they passed under a lamp, she stole a look at her companion's face. His hand still covered his eyes; he was gnawing his under-lip fiercely. He looked so ill, so miserable, that Nina, as before, felt a strange compassion mingling with her fear of this dangerously good-looking lunatic. Poor fellow! what a pity it seemed! She wondered what had deprived him of reason. Perhaps his wife was dead, or had left him, and his diseased brain conjured up her likeness in every woman he met. Geoffrey—his name was. Geoffrey what? His manner, voice, bearing, all proclaimed him in every sense of the word a gentleman. Here she became aware that the subject of her thoughts had moved slightly, and was regarding her steadily with a pair of very expressive dark eyes, full of a half-wistful tenderness, and certainly looking sane enough just now. She had been gazed at scores of times, by scores of lovers' eyes with less of sanity in them. But, she remembered shuddering, the worst of madmen were cunning enough at times to look perfectly sensible. Perhaps he had murdered this poor Adela, this wife of his, whom he seemed to have loved so passionately. Ah, what a terrible lottery is marriage! she reflected. She turned her head away, for his eyes seemed to thrill her as no other eyes had ever done. He was not too mad, evidently, to keep his promises; for he neither attempted to put his arm round her again nor to kiss her, for which she was intensely thankful.

"I can scarcely believe that I have found you again," he said,

taking her hand in his, and speaking with an odd catch in his voice; "that all the agony, the uncertainty, is over. It seems as though it must be a dream."

Poor Nina devoutly wished it had been a dream.

"Do you know I intended leaving England to-morrow?" he went on, holding her hand very tightly.

"Ah, if you had only left it to-day!" thought Miss Ferrers.

But she only murmured, "Yes?"

They were driving into the station now.

"Adela," went on the unhappy Geoffrey, "you will try to love me again?"

"Yes, oh, yes," replied Nina, with ready mendacity.

The hansom stopped with a jerk, and the girl's heart beat as her companion lifted her out. Should she try to get away *now*? she thought, as he turned to pay the cabman. No; he was watching her furtively and anxiously. Should she implore assistance from some benevolent stranger? No, he would simply claim her as his wife in that calm, lordly way as before, and no one would believe her. She must wait. So she walked quietly by his side until they emerged on to the platform. Her companion, who certainly managed to look sane enough at times, looked at his watch.

"We do not start for ten minutes," he said, "but we had better secure an empty compartment."

"Where are you going to take me?" she faltered.

"Home," he answered, looking at her searchingly; "where should I take you?" Then quickly, "Unless—would you rather remain in town to-night?"

"No, oh, no."

Nina's heart sank as they stopped before an empty carriage, and the obsequiously following porter flung open the door.

"No luggage," said Geoffrey curtly, waving him aside.

Then to Nina, hurriedly and anxiously:

"My darling, how pale you look, and how you are trembling! Let me bring you a glass of sherry, or a cup of tea, or something?"

"Yes, please, a cup of tea," gasped Nina, as she took her seat, her heart leaping to her mouth.

But he lingered.

"You need not be alarmed—er—Geoffrey," said Nina, smiling spasmodically and deceitfully into his anxious face. "You are afraid that I—I am going to run away from you, are you not?"

A dark flush rose to his brow, then receded again.

"Have I not reason to be afraid?" he said in a low voice.

"And have I not *promised*?" returned Nina, half-hysterically. "Can you not trust me?"

"Yes, my dearest," he replied. Then a little wistfully, "You—would not deceive me?"

"Ah, Geoffrey!" in reproachful tones.

"Forgive me," he said hastily. "I know you would not. Your word is sufficient."

Nina's heart smote her, but she only said :

"I hope so."

He hesitated a moment; then he went away. As Nina watched him along the platform she could not help noticing, even in her feverish impatience, what a fine-looking man he was; and certainly, mad or not, he would make a most attentive husband. In a few seconds she saw him disappear into the refreshment-room, and the next instant she had jumped out of the carriage, and was speeding swiftly along the platform, with limbs that trembled so that she could scarcely drag them along, in spite of her agony of terror. More than once she looked fearfully over her shoulder; but the tall form of her dreaded captor was nowhere to be seen—as yet. She crossed the entrance hall, and reached the line of waiting cabs. Then she looked back once more. No, he was not in sight.

"Cab, miss?" said the driver of the nearest hansom.

"Yes. Layton Gardens, South Kensington," she panted, her heart beating almost to suffocation. "Drive fast!" she went on hurriedly, as she scrambled into the vehicle, "as fast as you can."

"All right, miss."

The man whipped up his horse, and the station was soon left far behind. The horse went well, but he seemed to Nina the slowest of his kind; every slight block, every momentary stoppage, was a keen agony to the trembling girl; her strained ears and eyes seemed to conjure up pursuit in every shout, in every passing vehicle; her dreaded captor's voice seemed to sound in her ears, the haunting penetrating gaze of his eyes to meet her on every side. At last, with an inexpressible sense of relief, she saw that the hansom had turned into the Brompton Road. She breathed more freely; but not until she had reached Layton Gardens, and knocked wildly at her aunt's door, did she feel any degree of security. She rushed past the astonished page, almost fell upstairs, then, her room gained, she locked the door, as though dreading she might not be safe even there, and burst into a storm of tears and sobs.

"Well, Nina, you little will-o-the-wisp, so I have really got you at last. I had begun to think that your promises, like lovers' vows and pie-crust, were only made to be broken."

The speaker was Mrs. George Chillingly, dark-eyed, vivacious, and on the sunny side of thirty. Her companion was Nina Ferrers. They were seated in the cosy inner drawing-room at Chillingly, in affectionate proximity to a roaring fire. The time of year was January; the time of day was five o'clock P.M.

Although nearly two years had elapsed since Nina's extraordinary adventure, she had kept the experiences of that February night a

profound secret. Not even to Aunt Jane had she confided her "narrow escape." For months afterwards she had scarcely dared to go out alone, so great was her terror of again meeting and being captured by the unhappy man who suffered from so strange a delusion. But I am obliged to confess that she thought of him much more frequently than Aunt Jane would have approved, or indeed than she entirely approved herself. And, to Aunt Lavinia's indignation, she had sent five more suitors—all eligible—disconsolate away, and announced her fixed and unalterable intention of living and dying a spinster.

She had arrived at Chillingly only an hour ago, on a month's visit to her old friend and schoolfellow, Janet Foster, now Mrs. Chillingly.

"I thought we were never going to see you again," said the latter lady, stirring the fire vigorously. "And now that you have come, I want you to make yourself specially charming—even more charming than usual, I mean."

"Why?" smiled Nina, idly waving an elaborate fire-screen to and fro. "Have you any one particular staying here?"

"Only Colonel Lorimer just now. You have met *him* often enough. He and George are out murdering innocent little birds. I expect them in every moment. But it is not for either of *them* that you are to do the seductive, my dear. We expect a certain Mr. Beresford to-night—a new chum of George's. They met last autumn somewhere in Scotland, and George took a great fancy to him. I can't say he is exactly the kind of man *I* like. He came for a few days in November, and I felt as if I were at a funeral the whole time. He is, well—er—peculiar, very reserved, and melancholy, and *difficile* generally. So I want *you* to take him in hand."

"Thanks, very much," yawned Nina, "you are very kind; but I don't think I care about peculiar, reserved, melancholy, *difficile* men. I'm getting too old to exert myself by drawing them out. I prefer them ordinary, confidential, gay, and easy."

"Oh no, you don't. You always *can* charm into geniality those taciturn beings who are sphinxes to everybody else. Besides you *must*, because he is going to stay for weeks, and I could do nothing with him. George and Colonel Lorimer will spend the evenings in tearing old Gladstone to pieces, and discussing the Irish question until they are black in the face, as usual, and Mr. Beresford will sit silent, with a face expressive of utter indifference as to whether England is governed by a hypocrite, or a fool, or a mountebank, or not governed at all; so *you* must burst like a revelation upon this iceberg, and—thaw him! Besides, he has a splendid estate down in Staffordshire—Cardew, it is called—and is enormously wealthy. Ah, here comes Brookes with tea. Bring the table to the fire, Brookes. You don't take sugar, Nina? No, I thought not."

"Is this Mr. Beresford young, then? Is he handsome? or is he neither?" inquired Nina languidly, when the man had left the room.

"Oh, he is considerably over thirty, I should say. As to looks, he has rather a nice face, if he would only look a little less as if he wished he and everybody else were *dead*. He has the most extraordinary eyes, by the way; *mesmeric* eyes—quite. But after all, poor fellow, it is no wonder he looks gloomy; his is a most painful story."

"What kind of story?" said Nina, taking a rapid and exhaustive view of the cake-basket as she spoke. "A *decent* story, I trust?"

"Oh yes, quite; at least I believe so. I only know the mere outline. George told me (in confidence, of course), and you know the *scrappy* way men always dole out anything one particularly wants to know. But; good gracious, I must go and see if Macpherson has sent in enough flowers; he is the stingiest old creature. I had no idea it was so late. Now be sure you look your loveliest to-night, Nina *mia*. Oh yes, I know you have taken vows of celibacy. But I don't want you to *marry* the man—you couldn't if you tried; I only want you to entertain him, and waken him up a bit." And Mrs. Chillingly rustled away.

Nina did look very lovely as she stepped softly across the hall about an hour before dinner. She wore a quaintly made gown of some curious grey shade—a colour which would have been trying, probably, to most women, but which was eminently becoming to her. Her thick brown hair was piled loosely on the top of her pretty head; her cheeks were clearly, softly pink; her eyes dangerously dark and sweet.

She crossed the long drawing-room, which was empty, and parted the heavy curtains which divided it from the inner room. Then she paused, one arm slightly raised, her head bent a little forward.

The room was lighted only by the fire, and a single lamp, which burned on a distant table. Standing on the hearth-rug, looking down into the flickering flames, and leaning one elbow on the mantelpiece, was a tall, rather military-looking man, with close-cropped, iron-grey hair. It was not Mr. Chillingly; it was not Colonel Lorimer; therefore it must be the *difficile* stranger, Mr. Beresford.

The brass rings of the curtains rattled slightly. At the sound he turned, and Nina saw a pale, weary-looking face, with piercing deep-set eyes, and a stern, sad mouth, half hidden by a brown moustache. As his eyes met Nina's, a ghastly pallor overspread his features.

"Merciful Heaven!" he articulated in low, intense tones.

Nina *felt* the colour leave her cheeks. *Where* had she seen that face, heard that voice, looked into those eyes before? She

advanced a few steps into the room, then stood motionless, silent, terrified. He stood quite still also, his hand grasping the back of a chair, his breath coming short and quick, his face white as death.

"It is true, then!" he muttered, speaking seemingly half to himself, and with a quiver of mingled awe and rapture in his deep voice (Nina remembered the voice so well). "It is true, then—the dead *may* return?"

He came nearer—he held out his arms towards her.

"Adela!" he whispered, in a voice that shook with half-incredulous ecstasy. "Adela, *speaking* to me!"

Some uncontrollable, irresistible impulse—influence—what you will—for which she could never afterwards account, impelled her answer.

"Geoffrey!" she breathed in low, almost inaudible tones.

A fierce, sudden light leaped into his eyes.

"Ah, my darling! my wife!" he panted, still in that passionate whisper. "Why have you come? Is it to tell me that my long, weary waiting is over at last—that my days on earth are done—that we shall be together, you and I, for all *eternity*?"

He came nearer still. In the dim, uncertain light his eyes seemed to burn into hers. A spell seemed over her, which she could not have broken had her life been the forfeit. She tried to call out, but no cry would come. He was close to her now; she felt his breath on her cheek. In another moment she was in his arms—held close to his heart. But it was only for one brief second. With a short, sharp exclamation he released her, and staggered back. His expression changed rapidly, and he sank into a chair, his powerful frame trembling as a woman's might have done.

Freed from the magnetic gaze of his eyes, Nina recovered herself instantly, and, noting his extreme pallor, she advanced quickly towards him and laid her hand on his arm.

"You are ill," she said hastily, forgetting her fears for the moment.

"No, no," he muttered, waving her away. "Go—leave me."

Then in hoarse, exhausted tones he continued:

"In Heaven's name, who or what are you, who thus——"

He stopped and rose to his feet, leaning his hand heavily on a table near him. For a second or two he stood looking down at her agitated face, to which the colour was slowly returning. A strange expression, not disappointment, not relief, not mortification, and yet a mingling of all three, rested on his features.

"Pray pardon me," he said, evidently speaking with an effort, and as though he hardly knew what he said. "Pray accept my apologies, and excuse me. I—I am ill."

And, putting one hand confusedly to his head, he crossed the room, hastily parted the curtains, and was gone.

Nina sank into a chair, trembling in every limb. What extraordinary fate had brought her and this unhappy man under the same roof? Did Janet *know* that she had a raving lunatic for an inmate of her peaceful home? Evidently not, for she sailed into the room at this moment, looking as bright and brisk as possible.

"All alone, Nina? I thought the colonel would have been down. Child, how cold and pale you look! Come closer to the fire. George is not nearly ready yet, and Mr. Beresford has only just gone upstairs. How wretchedly ill he is looking. By the way, I was going to tell you about him." She drew a chair close to the fender, and, holding out a slender foot to the fire, went on, "He is a widower, I forgot to tell you. He married a very pretty American girl, and they adored each other. When they had been married about a year they had a son, and Mrs. Beresford was never the same after the child was born. I don't know if she was *mad*, but she was next door to it. The baby died when it was only two months old; and she grew worse. Sometimes she was morbidly depressed, sometimes irritable to frenzy. She developed a singular jealousy of Mr. Beresford's cousin, a Miss Scott, who lived with them, and accused the poor fellow—who had no eyes for any one but his wife—of being in love with this cousin, and all sorts of things. At last she would not speak to her husband at all, seemed to take a dislike to him, and at times did not even seem to know him. He would not hear of having her put under restraint, for the doctors gave him hope that by-and-by she might recover her reason. So things went on in this terrible way for some months, until one night, about two years ago, she disappeared. Poor Beresford was almost like a madman himself, for he absolutely worshipped her. He followed up all possible and impossible clues, but in vain. He was just going to sail for America, when he was taken ill with brain fever in a hotel in London. Well," lowering her voice, "they need not have looked so far from home, for—some months afterwards—" here Janet stopped and shuddered—"they found her body in a large pond in a lonely part of the grounds at Cardew. She had evidently either fallen in or committed suicide, poor young thing. They say he has been almost melancholy mad ever since. He is certainly *queer*. Why, Nina, how you are trembling! I didn't know you were so tender-hearted."

Just then the Vicar with his wife and daughter were announced followed almost immediately by Mr. Chillingly and Colonel Lorimer. The latter, who was an old friend of Nina's, took a seat near her, and entered into a low-toned conversation, in which, however, she took but little part. A horrible doubt—impression—conviction—was slowly developing in her mind, one which she could scarcely put into shape, and yet which grew stronger every moment. Her answers to the gallant colonel's remarks became more wildly wide of the mark every moment, until, happily, the gong sounded for dinner.

"Where's Beresford?" said the host, for the second time.

As the words left his lips Mr. Beresford entered, calm, self-possessed, but deadly pale. As Mrs. Chillingly introduced him to Nina, he started visibly; a half-incredulous, half-pained expression flitted over his face, but it was gone in a moment. He bowed silently, and, in obedience to a laughing command from his hostess, offered Nina his arm, and they all went in to dinner.

Certainly he was a novelty in the way of dinner-companions, for he only addressed her once, voluntarily, during the whole of the meal, and then it was to say in low though abrupt tones:

"Pardon me, am I right in understanding that your name is — *Ferrers*?"

"Yes," she answered, feeling horribly uncomfortable and nervous.

"Strange!" he murmured, half to himself—"very strange!"

He let his eyes rest for a moment on hers, then turned them hastily aside.

"I do not see why it should be!" returned Nina, rather haughtily.

"I beg your pardon," he said mechanically. Then he leaned back in his chair and absently fingered the stem of his hock-glass. He ate scarcely anything, she noticed, though he drank a good deal.

Queer, Janet had said he was. Most decidedly queer! Miss Ferrers gave an almost audible gasp of relief when her hostess rose to leave the room.

Mr. Beresford's conduct was not less eccentric when he entered the drawing-room. He at once crossed the room to where Nina was seated at the piano, at some little distance from the rest of the party. He did not speak to her, but seated himself in a low chair a little way behind her, so that she could not see him without turning her head. She was playing some dreamy melody of Schubert's, and as her fingers wandered over the keys she felt, though she could not see, that his eyes were bent upon her steadily.

Presently he leaned forward.

"Miss Ferrers," he said in a very low voice, "will you come into the conservatory with me for a few moments?"

She played several bars before she answered; then turning her eyes unwillingly to meet his, said somewhat nervously:

"Yes, if you wish it."

They passed into the semi-dusk of the half-lit conservatory, and Nina sat down on a green wire bench near a fragrant flowering shrub whose starry blossoms gleamed palely through the gloom. Beresford leaned his back against one of the slender iron columns which supported the building. He was silent for a short time; then he said abruptly:

"I owe you some apology, Miss Ferrers, for what must have seemed either idiotic folly on my part, or unwarrantable insolence. *This*," after a pause, "must be my excuse."

As he spoke he detached from his watch-chain a small locket, opened it, and—after looking at it for a few moments hungrily, passionately—held it towards Nina.

She bent forward, and as her eyes fell upon the delicately tinted ivory miniature it contained, she could not repress an astonished, half-indignant exclamation. It might have been her own portrait!

His eyes met hers again.

"It is my wife!" he said, and his voice was unsteady; "my dead wife!"

Nina gazed at the miniature stupidly. The resemblance was almost startling. But after a closer inspection it grew fainter. Nina's hair was dark; the hair of the pictured girl was auburn. Nina's eyes were brown; the other's dark blue. The mouth, too, was different; and, above all, the expression.

"You see the likeness—to yourself?" said Beresford briefly.

"Yes; oh, yes."

"Then can you understand what a shock it was to me to-night, when I saw you enter the room in the dim light? I—I had been thinking of—*her*. You can, perhaps, forgive me?"

"Oh, yes, yes," she murmured again.

"And yet," he went on, looking at her steadily, "I could have *sworn* you called me by my name!"

Nina became very pale. Beresford seated himself beside her, and went on in carefully repressed tones:

"My wife's name was also Ferrers—and you are her living image. It is strange—more than strange. Surely nothing but the tie of blood could account for such a likeness? Have you any relatives in America? I met my wife there, and we were married there." His features contracted sharply.

"Yes," faltered Nina, "I believe I have cousins in America."

"Of the same name—Ferrers?"

"Yes," said Miss Ferrers again, feeling angrily conscious that she had been behaving like a shy, timid school-girl during the entire evening.

"In New York?"

"Yes."

"Then you and—my late wife must have been cousins."

"I do not know. I never saw my American cousins. But as you say there is such a likeness, I suppose—I—Mr. Beresford, I must go—the heat—I feel faint."

"Allow me to fan you," he said quietly; and as he took up the fan which lay in her lap, she saw that his hand shook. She leaned back and closed her eyes for a moment. When she looked up again she met his gaze bent upon her, steadily, piercingly.

"We have met before, Miss Ferrers," he went on in clear, cold tones.

"Met before?" she echoed faintly.

"Yes. To-night was the second occasion, if my memory serves me, upon which I have had the honour of playing the fool in your presence."

"I—I don't understand you," she faltered.

"You will pardon me—you do understand me. You cannot have forgotten, I think, how unpardonably I annoyed and insulted you one February night two years ago! I need not, I am sure," haughtily, "further recall the circumstance to your memory. However insignificant my individuality may be, I flatter myself that such besotted, drivelling idiocy as I displayed upon that occasion could not fail to be remembered. It must have been a most entertaining experience for you, I imagine."

"Oh! *don't!*" uttered poor Nina.

"It was scarcely, however, so entertaining for me," he went on bitterly. "I acted madly, unpardonably; but I had *some* excuse; you had none. You know my story. At least," with a short laugh, "as Chillingly knows it, and, as you are his wife's bosom friend, I conclude you do. I was half crazed at that time by my poor wife's disappearance. Your extraordinary likeness to her—your words—your voice——"

He stopped. Nina sat pale and trembling. She remembered too well her words—*his* words; the touch of his arm, of his lips!

"If I was half mad before, I think I was wholly so when I found that, as I thought, I had *again* lost her—my poor wife! Let me entreat you, Miss Ferrers," he continued, breathing hard and with difficulty, "in future, when you feel inclined for practical joking, take care who your victims are. Your heartless jest that night almost cost me my reason."

"*Jest!*" she returned indignantly. "Is it possible you think me capable of—of——" And here, I regret exceedingly to state, Miss Ferrers burst into angry, hysterical tears.

Her companion looked perfectly agast.

"Miss Ferrers!" he exclaimed in extreme agitation.

She checked her sobs with a mighty effort.

"Don't speak to me!" she replied in a voice quivering with indignation. "How *dare* you! It is *you* who ought be ashamed of your behaviour that night. Nothing was further from my thoughts than *jesting*, I can assure you. I thought you were some dangerous *madman*! What was I to do? You would not listen to my entreaties; you *know* you would not. The only way of escape I could see was to humour you——" Here an unruly sob checked her utterance.

"Pray, calm yourself," he said in a low voice. "I was unjust. I see—I feel—that my mad folly alone was to blame. Forgive me

—do forgive me!" He took her hand as he spoke, and looked at her with contrite and anxious eyes.

"I will *never* forgive you!" she returned passionately, snatching away her hand and rising to her feet. He rose also, looking pale and agitated.

At this moment Mrs. Chillingly entered the conservatory.

"Nina, we want you to sing——" she began, then stopped, as she noted her friend's crimson cheeks and wet, flashing eyes, and observed with amazement the changed aspect of the usually stern and indifferent Beresford.

"Miss Ferrers and I have just discovered that we are distant cousins," said Beresford gravely, seeing his hostess's surprised air. "*Cousins!*" she echoed. "How very charming! Why Nina——"

But Miss Ferrers had disappeared.

How Mr. Beresford made his peace with his newly discovered relative neither very well knew. They had no formal reconciliation; but during the days which followed they appeared to mutually bury the hatchet, and to drift into a calm *bonne camaraderie* which seemed eminently satisfactory to both. Not seldom Beresford talked to her of his dead wife. She listened sympathetically, and with her clear, wholesome good sense swept away much of what was morbid in his sorrow; nay, even lessened the sorrow itself. But there was nothing sentimental, let me tell you, in this good fellowship. Plato himself would have viewed it with grim approval. Their convictions, it appeared, were identical regarding many subjects. They just differed enough to give piquancy to their discussions. Both agreed that love was a folly, and matrimony a mistake. Nina's view was that, *whoever* one married, one was safe before six months to wish oneself single again. Beresford only differed from her so far as to incline to the somewhat morbid belief that the more passionately one loved, the more certain the beloved object was to change or to die. Therefore it was clear to both that men and women were happier unwed. Nina considered, too, that woman's sphere of usefulness was narrowed by the duties of domestic life; Beresford, that men were fools to allow one passion so to enslave the heart and the senses as to stake all their chances of happiness on possessing the love of any one woman. Thus both were calmly superior to the tender passion; the woman because she had never felt its power, the man—because he *had*. So at the end of a month they parted, each feeling that they had laid the foundation of a valuable, sensible, lifelong friendship.

Having explained the above facts, I will leave it to my readers to explain what followed.

A year and a half had passed. Two men were standing, one hot June night, in the curtained doorway of a fashionably crowded ball-room in Mayfair.

"By Jove!" said the lesser and fairer of the two, "there's Beresford. How fit he looks, to be sure! When I last heard of him he was doing the broken-hearted recluse—melancholy mad, and all that sort of thing. He doesn't answer to either description just now. And I say, Harcourt, what a pretty woman he is talking to! Who is she? Do you know her?"

The individual addressed as Harcourt turned his head languidly, and fixed his eyeglass more firmly in his sleepy left eye.

"What a fellow you are to talk, Kerr!" he said in slow expostulatory tones. "Where? Don't see Beresford at all."

"There, man, just opposite, talking to the woman in white and gold. By Jove, what a smile she gave him there! Wish she'd look at *me* like that."

Harcourt's gaze travelled slowly round the room until it alighted on the lady in question, who certainly *was* a remarkably pretty woman, even in that assemblage, where pretty women were the rule and not the exception.

"Oh, that's his wife, don't you know?" he said with an air of lazy surprise.

"His *wife*!—Beresford's wife! Pooh! my dear fellow, you are raving. His wife has been dead for the last three years and more. She died just before I went out to Jamaica."

"Granted," returned the other tranquilly. "But the law has yet to be passed, so far as I know, which denounces second marriages as illegal."

"The deuce! Then he has married again?"

"Exactly."

"Well! you surprise me. You remember how awfully cut up he seemed after his first wife's death? We thought he was off his head. I never saw her, but I always understood she was wonderfully good-looking. By Jove! the fellow has taste. Who was she—number two, I mean?"

"What a bore you are, Kerr! She was a Miss Ferrers, a cousin of his first wife, I believe; and only that she is a little darker and has different coloured eyes, she is almost the image of her predecessor."

"You don't say so! 'The prescription as before?' Well, it seems to have worked a wonderful cure. Upon my word, some fellows always manage to get the best of everything. You don't suppose she has another cousin, now?—or a sister, eh? Ah, I was afraid not. By *Jove*, she is a pretty woman! Introduce me, will you?"

FAITH: A WOMAN WITH A PAST.

A STORY IN TWO PARTS.

By BEATRICE MAY BUTT, Author of "Miss Molly," &c.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

"Who can pluck out the bitter weed of pain,
Nor harm one tendril of remembered joy."

TIME slipped on. Cold, frost-bound January gave place to February's short, dark days, and nominally Mr. Courthope remained on under his sister's roof; nominally, because he was in much request, and a week seldom passed without his absenting himself for some of its days; and even when at home he was generally away for the evening, either alone or with the Aylmers. He was looking for a wife, his sister decided, and with the laudable intention of encouraging such a praiseworthy motive, she was always ready to accompany him whithersoever he would. His choice should not be limited if she could prevent it; so night after night they dined out, or received friends at home. Fanny certainly enjoyed herself, and judging by the willingness with which brother and husband accompanied her, the enjoyment was shared.

But there were two members of the household that all the coming and going failed to affect. Faith Delaval teaching or amusing the two little boys in the bright schoolroom, and Henry Gilbert working day after day at the book, arranging Mr. Courthope's papers, helping out an explanation with a sketch of his clever pencil, and so preparing for the public the work that had been the employment of Dick Courthope's leisure hours for years.

But though he worked hard, and the short winter daylight often tempted him abroad, his daily constitutional being most often taken when the small party were assembled for tea, still there were hours after the little boys had gone to bed, and silence reigned downstairs, when he would leave the lonely dining-room, and instead of returning to his work find his way to the schoolroom, and ask permission to sit there for awhile. And Faith was always glad to see him. There seemed to be no

sharply defined barrier between him and her, as was the case with all the other members of the household. Between those working for their daily bread there must be a community of interest, which is a line of separation from those to whom no such sharp necessity has come.

It was Mr. Gilbert who talked most, chiefly of things and places he had seen, for he had been a great traveller. He was not influenced by any desire of proving a theory in regard to the woman to whom he talked; it was not her character but herself that interested him, and it may safely be averred that if he could not have analyzed her in so many words and foreseen her future steps so clearly, yet that he had formed a juster conception of herself than had Mr. Courthope.

She would put down her book at his entrance and taking up her embroidery would listen quietly and with interest to all he had to say.

She did not talk very much, merely asked a question now and then, or made some comment that showed him their minds were in accord.

"You must have read a great deal about foreign lands," he observed one evening as they sat together in the fire glow, in answer to some casual reference she had made to a little-known book of travels.

"They interest me," she assented. "The old aunt with whom I used to live preferred that kind of reading. Women are very reflective," she added after a pause, "and we had both acquired the taste, I think, from the same person."

It was the first allusion he ever remembered hearing her make to the past that lay on the other side of the five years, but he did not continue the subject, and a moment later: "But you have done better than read," she said, "you have seen so much."

"Yes, I have seen a great deal, but there is nothing like England."

"And are you going to stay in England now?"

"It is so difficult to decide," he said. And then a minute later, "So many things make all decisions difficult. My present work is delightful, but it draws to an end, and then one must decide again."

He was looking at her almost as if she could offer him help. She put down her work, crossing her hands upon it, as if in answer to the vaguely felt appeal.

"I suppose," she began hesitatingly, "that it is poverty that makes the choice difficult. But sometimes it seems to me it really simplifies it. If we do not plan beforehand, often just at the very last moment when we have given up all hopes of help a way seems to open. I myself have known what it is to be very poor, and to wonder where I was to go next, and then,"

smiling a little, "Bob and Dick wanted me; so you see I speak from experience."

He did not answer.

He had risen and taken a turn across the room, but now he stood once more by her side.

"It is not poverty that is troubling me," and his voice shook a little, "I am beset with difficulties."

"No," she assented; "to be poor is not the worst evil. We can bear that, when it is only that."

"A *man* can," and his voice sunk lower, "but not a woman."

Perhaps the faint thrill in his voice reached her ears, for a slight troubled expression passed over her face, and the eyes which had been looking so steadily into his drooped and wavered for a moment.

"A woman, like a man, can bear anything that is given her to bear. It is only courage that is required."

"Only courage," he repeated.

But before he had time to add anything further the door was opened, and Mrs. Aylmer, resplendent in gold-coloured satin, stood in the entrance.

"Miss Delaval," she began, and then, seeing she was not alone, she hesitated a second. "The evening was dull," she went on, "so we have come home, and I said I would run upstairs in the hope you were still here, to ask you to come down. Now this is fortunate; we can improvise a concert. I feared Mr. Gilbert was out."

The quick, cheerful voice seemed to break a spell, and Faith found herself almost unconsciously taken down to the drawing-room, where lamps were lighted, and cheerful, pleasant talk was going on. It swept away the memory of that low, earnest voice as if it had been a dream.

"Supper and a smoke," said Mr. Courthope cheerfully, "that is what I need. What a very fatiguing dinner! I will not dine out any more unless I can choose whom I shall take in. At least, one should have the option of refusing. I was too cross and dull to eat, even."

"Now I, on the contrary," remarked Mr. Aylmer, "though dull, had a very good dinner."

"Well, I didn't. Dulness takes away my appetite. This is the only house in which I am amused."

"Now, I wonder," remarked Mrs. Aylmer, "which of us can take that soft flattery to our soul. But come, Dick, just help me to carry down this armchair to the smoking-room. Bob is busy, I see. No, thank you," as Mr. Gilbert offered assistance. "Dick," she began, the instant the door had closed behind them, "where did you pick up Mr. Gilbert?"

"My dear Fanny, what fearful expressions you use! You positively make me shudder. Now, does he look like a person to

be 'picked up'? I *discovered* him with infinite trouble and labour."

"Well," she retorted, "I think he has in return discovered, or is about to discover, Faith Delaval."

"What do you mean?"

Mr. Courthope stood still for a moment and looked at his sister, an expression half comical, half serious in his dark eyes.

"Why, I am discovering her."

"What do you mean?" was her reply to this enigmatical remark.

"Well, tell me about it," he went on directly. "It is supremely interesting, for he is not apparently an adorer of the fair sex. Is he successful, or——"

"Do wait a moment, Dick; a man is the most hopeless person to say anything to. I only said I *suspected* it."

"That," interposed Mr. Courthope, "I must deny."

"Well, that was what I meant to say if you had not interrupted me."

"Then it is merely a case of *suspicion*—not even," with a faint interrogative tone, "one of circumstantial evidence?"

"Yes, that was what I wished to tell you."

Mr. Courthope sighed audibly.

"They were together in the schoolroom talking when I went in, and quite intimately," which was rather a stretch of Mrs. Aylmer's imagination. "I am sure he is in love. You watch them to-night—that is what I wished to tell you. And she is such a sweet woman that of course——"

"Of course you want her married. Why, I wonder? She seems to me to be very well as she is."

"She would be much happier," Mrs. Aylmer confidently replied; "that is, of course, if he is a nice man."

"Yes; that is merely an afterthought!"

"I do wish, Dick, you would marry, and then you would not say those disagreeable, satirical things."

"Would that cure me? Is it not possible it might make me ten times worse?"

Returning to the drawing-room a few minutes later, there was not very much, even Mrs. Aylmer had to acknowledge to herself, to give colour to her late observations. Mr. Gilbert was seated by the piano, picking out, unaided, the air of a song, and Miss Delaval stood on the hearth-rug by Mr. Aylmer, who had returned from his expedition to the cellar, and was giving an account of the trials to which he had been subjected during the evening.

"A dinner like this is a positive infliction," he observed in tones of heartfelt self-pity.

"You none of you seem to have enjoyed yourselves much."

"It was badly arranged," continued Mr. Aylmer in a grumbling tone; "there was one lady too few, which must spoil a small party."

"Perhaps that was not their fault."

"Perhaps not, but *this* was. Now, who would you guess were the men they put me between? The host, who is quite deaf, on one side, and Dick on the other."

"You are very hard to please, Bob."

"Now, Dick, was it not a silly arrangement?"

"How can you expect me to allow it?"

"Now I wish, Bob, I had been in your place," remarked Mrs. Aylmer. "I am sure Dick was the most amusing person present."

But Mr. Aylmer adhered to his own opinion.

"Well, all I can say is, he didn't try to amuse me."

"I do not dispute the fact," observed Mr. Courthope; "from the first moment I knew the attempt would be useless."

"It is a subject we can discuss in the smoking-room," here observed Mr. Aylmer. "I propose we adjourn thither. This is a very good move," he continued, when they had all migrated to the cosy little smoking-room. "Now we can talk far more comfortably."

"And we can smoke," added Mr. Courthope; "and that is, after all, one of the great divisions of the world, where one can smoke and where one cannot."

It seemed to Mr. Courthope—he was very observant—that, consciously or unconsciously, the former he was inclined to believe, Miss Delaval addressed her remarks, which were not many, more often to him than she was prone to do. She had seated herself on a footstool by the fire, and had not moved, when, on her refusing a large armchair, he had drawn it up to the hearthrug, and seating himself thereon, had thus, as it were, placed himself between her and the rest of the company. It was rare for her to wander far from Mrs. Aylmer's side on occasions when she appeared in the evening, and this fact went farther towards adducing the truth of his sister's theories than her words. He did not speak, but he watched her, and he knew by the whole attitude, the lightly clasped hands, the eyes turned towards the fire-glow, that her thoughts were not with her present surroundings.

Safe in the absorption of the others, who were trying to get up a game of whist, she had forgotten time and scene and had closed the doors on a world of her own.

"Miss Delaval," at length Mr. Courthope broke the silence, "I have been all this time devising a treat for you. Are you fond of animals?"

"No, I don't think I am."

"It is an unpropitious beginning, Dick," commented Mr. Aylmer; "but never mind, go on." Mr. Courthope laughed. "Better not *go on*," he said, "better begin again."

Miss Delaval lifted her head, a shade of colour on her cheeks.

"I beg your pardon," she began; "did you not ask me——"

"If you liked animals, yes; but I see I should have begun differently. I should have said, I had promised Dick and Bob to take them to the Zoo to-morrow; and then added, would you come with us? You see it is not necessary to like animals for that."

"No, it is not; certainly," and he knew she was rousing herself to be interested, because she felt that in some unknown way she had been ungracious; "but——"

"Oh, you had much better go, my dear," said Mrs. Aylmer kindly. "I am going out for the day, Bob and I, and we shall not be back till late. It may not be very amusing, but it will be better than staying here alone."

"Bob has evidently impressed my sister with the fact that I am not very entertaining," Mr. Courthope said. "I hope you are not frightened."

"No, I should like to go," she said rather quickly. "It seems to me very kind of you to have thought of it, only," smiling a little, "I should have imagined Dick and Bob were quite enough to look after. From experience I can tell you they are very troublesome."

"I am not alarmed. I am quite old enough and big enough to look after you all three."

He subsided once more into silence. He had gained his point, which for the moment was to insure an hour's talk, when it seemed to him it would be very easy to discover what it was that was affecting her. He felt keenly that of all present she had sought him out, and that it was to him, for some unexplained reason, she turned. He would have said of her a month ago she was a woman well able to stand alone, but to-night he was not so sure. He would rather have said, judging by his instincts alone, and not by the knowledge he had of her, that she sought in his strength, protection,—but protection from what, from whom? He looked downwards at the wavy brown hair, which gleamed ruddily in the fireglow, and as he did so, as if aware of the look, she turned her head and met it—met it with some sudden appeal, almost, so it seemed to him, as strong as if she had put it into words, and cried to him for help.

He sat more upright, and instinctively laid down his pipe, but the movement, the change of position, roused her. She rose to her feet quickly.

"I am not a very cheerful companion, I fear," she said a little nervously. "Good-night, Mrs. Aylmer."

"You look very tired," said Mrs. Aylmer kindly, and she drew the girl down to her and kissed her. "I think this dull, dreary weather is bad for us—we must think of a nice place, and go for a holiday."

"You are always inventing holidays," she replied. "I don't think I work hard enough to deserve them, and I am going to have one to-morrow."

"So you are. I only hope you won't dislike it as much as I should."

Only one person noticed that after Mrs. Aylmer's words she said a good-night that included the other two players, without offering to shake hands, but that person followed her to the door, saying he would light her candle for her, which he did; and having done so, he held it a moment before giving it to her.

"Good-night, Miss Delaval," he said, taking her hand in his; "if one is in doubt, difficulty, trouble"—slowly—"very often an outside opinion is of value. 'Things grow distorted with looking at them long by the light of our own candle.' That is a maxim"—more lightly—"it is well to remember."

"Thank you," she said, and a second later, "Good night," and turned up the narrow flight of stairs. He stood still, watching her till she was out of sight, till he heard her door close overhead, and then he walked slowly back to the others.

Back in his seat by the fire he was still haunted by the eyes that had looked into his.

"Is she in love with him, I wonder? No, I don't think so. Perhaps he has proposed and been refused; that is far more likely. Though it does not make any difference to me. Why should it?" angrily. "I don't want her to marry me. I only want to understand her."

Upstairs in her small pretty room, Faith Delaval had drawn the curtains and opened the window, and was looking forth into the close, warm February night. She was not seated, but standing perfectly still and straight in the shadow of the curtain, and thinking, as she had been thinking all the evening, of that present which seemed threatening to cut away the past from beneath her feet.

Mr. Gilbert's words and looks in the schoolroom—they seemed separated from this moment by days, instead of these few brief moments. They seemed indeed to be but part of this month in which they had lived under the same roof; and if a part, what part? What would she lose, what gain, when his doubts set at rest—whatever doubts were harassing him—he went forth again to fight his battle with the world?

"I do not know what to do. I do not understand myself. That is," scornfully, "a confession for me to make. I am ashamed of it."

And then, covering her face with her hands, "Why did you leave me?" she cried; and she kissed the dark ring on her finger. "With you I was safe and happy. I loved you; I loved you," with sudden passion. "You were all the world to me. With you I understood myself. Now——"

She turned away from the window, and clasping her hands together, began pacing up and down the room.

"Oh, I wish you were here," she said again. "I want help. I do not know what to do, and yet it should not be so difficult to decide. Marriage without love I have sworn should never tempt me, I who have known what love is. Then why am I tempted? It is because he is poor and unhappy, even as I am myself. That is it," with a sigh of relief; "riches would never tempt me, as poverty does."

* * * *

Another dull, hazy February day; Mr. and Mrs. Aylmer, congratulating themselves that the haze had not turned to rain, started off before lunch on their expedition to Kew, and immediately afterwards Miss Delaval took the little boys to meet Mr. Courthope, as pre-arranged, at the Zoological Gardens. She had not seen him since the previous evening, Mrs. Aylmer having told her his arrangements, as he had had to go out, and would not have time to return. Neither had she seen Mr. Gilbert. He had not appeared at lunch, and on inquiring for him, the maid told her he was out. But he had left a note for her, the servant added, at least he had said something about one. It was found almost immediately, with many apologies for the delay in delivering it, and Miss Delaval opened it. It only contained a few words, and she was not sure while reading them of the sensations they caused.

"DEAR MISS DELAVAL,—

"I fear it will be too late when you return this afternoon, to ask you to take a turn in the square. I am *sure* it will be, so I am going to ask you if you will go with me to-morrow morning. I feel as if our conversation last evening was left in an unfinished state, and as my task is drawing to a close I venture to ask this of you, instead of leaving it to chance." And then his signature,
"HARRY GILBERT."

She sat down with the children, but through all their happy talk she was aware of an undercurrent of questioning and of doubt. She was not certain what answer she would give, or how she would even word it if she sat down to write. And finally she found herself driving away with the note in her pocket and the answer unwritten.

"It does not, after all, need an answer," she solaced herself by saying. "I shall see him to-night, and can tell him then myself what we are going to do to-morrow."

But her thoughts were shortly disturbed by their arrival at their destination and the boys' joyful exclamations on seeing their uncle.

"It does not say much for youthful faith," he observed; "but it is most evident they did not expect I should be here."

"It is more likely," observed Miss Delaval, "that even at their early age they are startled to find what they hope and expect come to pass."

"That is a bitter observation, Miss Delaval. Still I let it pass, and only throw in as a compensation that many things occur which we neither dared hope nor expect."

"I doubt if that is any compensation," she answered quickly.

"Are you not ungrateful? The world is very often full of pleasant surprises. Not the great unmeasured joys which we all seemed to expect were ours of right when we first came into it, but pleasant little surprises nevertheless."

"But if, as you say," she went on, speaking more impetuously than was her wont, "we have once hoped for something greater, would it be possible to be satisfied with something less?"

"Why not? We all learn to do without."

"But then you acknowledge it," she urged. "You yourself say that what comes after is faint and small in comparison with that which we first hoped for. Well, I think the pure, undivided memory of the great is better than the acceptance of the less, and being content with it."

"But supposing," he said tentatively, "that after all we discovered the supposed lesser bore the seeds of the greater, would it not be worth while trying to see if such were the case?"

"It would be impossible."

There was the faintest waver in the decisive words, as if she were reviewing them as she spoke.

And after she had spoken, she drew a little away from him, following the delighted boys to a cage wherein many monkeys were disporting themselves.

He did not follow her. For a moment he stood still, looking at her with a kind of doubt as to what he should say next, for he saw she was following out the train of thought to which his words had given rise. But before he had time to decide she came back to his side.

"Life would be so easy," she said, as if there had been no break in their talk, "if one were one of these animals. Plenty of food and a kind guardian, that is all that is required. How it would simplify matters."

"That shows," he said, "that that is best for a woman."

"What, good food?" And she smiled.

"No, a kind guardian."

"You mean," she began slowly, "that a woman is better married. Men always seem to think that; why?"

She was looking directly at him, and for the moment there seemed absolutely no answer to her 'why.'

"A woman is helpless," he began.

"I am not," she answered firmly, apparently not noticing the

pronoun which reduced the abstract to the personal. "I am strong."

"You think so."

"I do not care to discuss myself," she answered.

"Well, let us revert to our former talk. Let me see: where were we?"

"Why, I asked you, should it be more desirable for a woman to marry than a man. Every one seems to think so, therefore there must be some reason, good or bad; and you think it is good."

"I do. I judge from what I have seen; a woman is not happy alone."

"And you think," she repeated, "judging from what you have seen, that even when they have not married for love, they are happier?"

He stopped meditatively, knocking the tiny pebbles about with his stick, then: "Women are adaptive," he began. "If a man is in love with her, if she accepts his love, she grows to love the love, if not the lover."

"That is very cruel," she said slowly. "A past with all happiness buried in it, is better than such a future as that."

"It is not," he said decidedly; "it contains the germs of happiness, it rests with patience, faith and tenderness to do the rest."

"A little love," she answered, "would do more than all three."

"Soit," he replied; "but whence do you get your little love? 'No hand of man made yet a living flower, nor can you manufacture love,'" he quoted; "it grows."

"Dick," she called.

The child had wandered nearer, and she stretched out her hand and drew him towards her.

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. Courthope, turning his head, "I thought you spoke to me."

"No, to this Dick," she said gently, absently, as if not seeing the force of her words. "Tell me," suddenly, "if a woman came to you and said she loved you, and that her love would make you happy, would you feel inclined to give up your freedom and your past, and believe her?"

He smiled.

"I do not think," he answered, "the case is likely to occur, but if it did——"

"Nothing is serious or sacred to you," and there was a thrill of unaccustomed passion in her words. "I wish——"

"Tell me what you wish."

The laugh had died out of his tones, his eyes and voice were alike grave. But even the change did not serve to restore the charm that he felt his light words had broken, and all he could hope was that some happy chance might re-act in his favour. He knew that somehow she had been on the verge of reposing some confidence in him, and he was angry with himself at the

careless words that had provoked its withdrawal. He did not question himself as to the wherefore he desired the confidence. He scarcely wondered what it might be. Most likely nothing more than that she was harassed—he had discovered that for himself—and had felt a wish to talk about herself to him, because being friendless and alone, she had turned to him feeling, perhaps unconsciously, that he had an instinctive knowledge of her difficulties.

“But what were they?”

He could not decide, and dared not withdraw his mind to review the matter for fear of the clue escaping him.

He must wait; and meanwhile he gradually guided the conversation into fresh channels, dexterously avoiding whatever might give birth to a suspicion that he was anxious to learn more than she was willing to tell. But she made no attempt to repel him. Perhaps she did not see, perhaps she allowed herself to be blinded, or she was too glad of the proffered interest and sympathy to quite cut herself adrift from it.

Little by little the talk shifted—how, he scarcely knew himself—from their present surroundings to his past travels, for he was bent upon skilfully avoiding anything that might seem like probing; of herself she rarely spoke. Therefore it was with a start, almost as of surprise, that suddenly—at least, so it seemed to him, for he could not recall what had led up to it—he heard her say:

“If you had been very unhappy——” She paused irresolutely. They were standing in a large room containing many cages; in each one a parrot chattered and shrieked. It seemed to Mr. Courthope that in a minute the noise had grown deafening, or that the low, uncertain voice was becoming inaudible.

“Come away,” he said, “from this horrible place. Here, Bob, when you and Dick are tired of it you will find us outside.”

Once more in the comparative quiet and peace of the dull afternoon he lifted his hat with a sigh of relief.

Something, an unaccustomed momentary something, had stirred him. It might have been merely the noise—it was passing now—but for the moment he had felt unable or unwilling to listen to what she had to say, which was not very wise, considering all the trouble he had given himself to hear it.

“That is better,” he said half apologetically. “I had not realized how appalling it was. And it was especially good of you not to complain, because you know you confessed that you did not like animals.”

She lifted her head and looked at him gratefully, though she said nothing; and he went on slowly, not meeting her eyes, but looking straight ahead:

“We have all been unhappy at some time or another, but the difficult thing to remember is that unhappiness is not a fixed state. It is a tide that ebbs and flows. Nothing exists in this

world that is free from change, though the change may be so gradual that we may not recognize the transition. Only one day we find that yesterday it was, and to-day it is not, or *vice versa*."

"Then what is the good of suffering," she cried; and there was a break in her voice—"of pain or grief, if one is to go through it and find it was all borne for an unreality—for a something that does not exist?"

"That is too subtle a question for a brief answer, but may it not be because we change with it, and that that was all that was required?"

"All?" she repeated.

"There is a price for everything," he answered, "and the price of anything worth having is heavy."

"But it is not worth having. You *cannot* understand, of course," speaking low and quickly; "no one can understand. But if you give up your past, you give up so much of your life—it has gone for nothing."

He understood her then in a moment, if he had not done so before, perhaps better than she understood herself.

"But if your past has lost its value, why cling to it?" he said slowly.

She was looking down, but he saw a little wave of colour pass over her cheeks, and her hands were tightly clasped together for a moment; then she lifted her eyes to his, and though her lips were trembling and her voice was very low, her words reached him clearly enough.

"But then the past or the present must be unreal. One cannot believe in both."

"You analyze too much," he answered. "You refuse to take life simply; you are afraid of accepting what is offered to you——"

"Wait, wait," she faltered, cutting in twain his decisive speech; "it is only that I do not understand."

"Life is not given us to understand, but to accept."

"Thank you," she answered humbly. "That is a very good word; I will remember it;" and she smiled a faint, troubled smile.

She looked round for the boys as she spoke, as if with a view to escape, but he stood still, determined now he had found the clue that she should learn all there was to learn on the subject.

"You are determined to manage your life in your own way; you will not even accept what you want because you fear that it may clash with what you have predetermined. Your own happiness, and that of others, does not matter to you, so long as you can be true to the false light which you have resolved to follow."

Her eyes did not meet his, or she might have seen they were kinder than his words.

"You are very hard," she said, shrinking away from him; "but yes," she added a moment later, "perhaps you are right."

And it was in silence she turned back and sought the children, and still in silence that she parted from him, and drove away with her little charges.

But after she had gone he began walking slowly homeward, and his thoughts were still with her.

"Was I hard? Perhaps; but I believe I was right. Yes, I am sure I was. She has put up a monument to the past, and is determined not to destroy it, partly because she fears it might prove to herself she had forgotten. Now," he stopped for a moment, "now she will go home and accept Henry Gilbert, and be a happy, ordinary woman for the rest of her life. And of course one ought to be very glad."

(To be concluded.)

WORDS.

WORDS! What are they? Only a mode of speech
 Designed to give some utterance to thought,
 If thought be present, and if thought mean aught.
 If not, it is to mystify, not teach,
 That men make language; and the voice of each
 Reflects but poverty of mind untaught
 To yield the food that hungry ones besought
 Throughout all time and eagerly beseech.

But though the soul waft anthems to the sky,
 The brain grows weary and the spring runs dry,
 Choked with its metaphors of "flowers" and "birds."
 "God save you, friend!" this I at least may cry,
 Careless of praise or of the carper's girds:
Basta! Bravissimo! What are they? Words.

PERCY REEVE.

A DAY WITH THE DEVON AND SOMERSET STAGHOUNDS.

By MRS. EDWARD KENNARD,

AUTHOR OF "KILLED IN THE OPEN," "THE GIRL IN THE BROWN HABIT," &c.

AN Irish landlord and his daughter, with nothing, or next to nothing, to live upon.

I hope your sympathies are enlisted. If they are not, they ought to be; for we are reduced from comfort to discomfort, from a good social position to obscurity, and from comparative affluence to a state bordering on downright pauperism.

I am twenty-one years of age, and I pity myself intensely; but I pity my father still more. I have all my life before me. Something may turn up; something may happen. Who knows? And even at the worst, youth is always hopeful and sanguine. But papa, at sixty-three, suddenly finds himself turned out of his house by a pack of idle, dishonest, good-for-nothing tenants, who have deprived him of his fortune, and for the last five years have rendered his life a burden.

And all this came of the Land League. Until that iniquitous society spread and took root in the country, and was virtually encouraged by Mr. Gladstone's Government, we rubbed along fairly well. Papa was then Mr. O'Brian, of O'Brian Castle, and master of the Ballynakillem hounds. He had kept them for twenty years, and no keener sportsman or truer fox-hunter ever threw his leg across the pigskin.

I look back with regret to those happy days. It seems to me that whatever kind fate may hold in store for me, nothing can ever equal the time when I was mistress of the big, rambling old castle, with its wild wilderness of a garden, and could ride any horse I pleased in the stables.

Oh! the fun of forcing those half-broken three and four year olds to hop on and off a high bank, and of scouring after recalcitrant hounds at a swinging gallop! Those glorious hours spent in the hunting-field will for ever live in my memory. So, too, will the broad, rippling Shannon, rushing down between two banks of verdure, as seen from our drawing-room windows. Many a time have I stood and looked at it, whilst the red sun sank slowly in the west and reflected its fiery glories in the silvery water, and the great trees on the opposite shore stood out black as ink against the crimson sky. The beauty and peace of the scene seem to have stamped themselves upon my spirit for ever.

And now these things are over. The sights and sounds of my childhood have vanished, and at twenty-one I am called upon to make a fresh and sordid start in life. It is very hard—very hard to have to leave the beautiful, wild, free country where I was born and bred, and to be shut up in a close and horrible city—to be a mere nobody amongst a vast herd of human beings with whom you feel out of tune—to find your nerves grated like a nutmeg every hour of the day—never to have enough money, and above all when you go out into the streets and look at the many well-bred horses you see around, to feel that yours may never be the good luck to sit upon one again. Ah! yes, as I said before, I am very, very sorry for myself, and hate the Liberal Government with all the fervour of which my nature is capable. I think horrible things of it, and if it were not for papa I should say them out loud; but he cannot bear to hear even his enemies abused.

But it is so sad to see him. Five years ago he was a hale, upright, stalwart man, with a fine fresh colour in his cheeks and eyes as clear as a hawk's. When he went out arrayed for the chase, in all the glories of his red coat and huntsman's cap, it sent a thrill of pride through my frame to see him. And yet he must have had troubles even in those days. Our income could never have been equal to our expenditure. The crash did not come all at once; we struggled on as long as we could. Everything about the house and grounds fell into disrepair. We cut down our establishment, lived in half the castle, hunted only three days a week instead of four; but all these petty sacrifices were in vain. Tenant after tenant, backed up by the Land League, partly through natural reluctance and partly through intimidation, refused to pay any rent. Matters became desperate; still father hoped against hope and looked forward to better days. Alas! they never came.

And then an incident took place which hastened the finale.

We were out hunting—I remember it all so well—and were just drawing the first covert. The hounds were very mute; they did not utter a sound. It was a sure find, and father wondered at their silence. Even old Prettymaid, who had the best nose in the whole pack, never once threw her tongue. The gorse was very thick, and there were no rides cut through it. Father cheered them on from the outside. At last he grew impatient and blew his horn. Do you know what happened then? Some five or six animals crawled slowly and painfully out of covert. They rolled in agony on the grass for a few minutes, their poor limbs jerking convulsively, and then they died—died under father's very nose, and by poison.

He swore a solemn oath that he would leave the country where such abominations took place. He said the spirit had gone out of the Irishmen, that they had turned themselves into cowards and assassins; and the next day we packed up our things and left.

And now here we are, living in a little poky London lodging, in a narrow street running out of the Brompton Road. Not a very choice neighbourhood, but beggars cannot be choosers. Our agent was deputed to settle up affairs after our departure from Ireland, and he tells us that three hundred a year is all we have to live upon.

This is bad enough, and yet there are other troubles even greater than monetary ones. Papa is a different man; his health has broken down altogether. He sits for hours staring blankly out of the window at the rows of dingy houses opposite. Oh! how we miss the noble Shannon now. For some time I have been seriously uneasy about him, and yesterday I made him go and see a doctor. Only think what the doctor said! He said that father had a cataract forming in both eyes, and that when the winter came round he must submit to an operation, the cost of which would be a hundred guineas. A hundred guineas in our position! What a mockery! No wonder we neither of us feel very cheerful. Poor dear old dad! my heart is fit to break as I sit opposite to him at the breakfast-table and notice how all the life and manhood seem to have gone out of his countenance. And yet his spirits must be kept up at any cost; Doctor Branksome particularly enjoined it. But how? Oh, for some break, some change in our narrow, monotonous lives! We country people, used to roaming about the green fields, with the grass under our feet and the sky over our heads, feel imprisoned when surrounded on all sides by huge, grimy masses of bricks and mortar. Nevertheless we have a few friends in the metropolis, and it is an undeniable fact that London is the best place in the whole world in which to hide your diminished head.

It is the end of July, and town has grown very hot and dusty. The white pavements glare, the sun beats down, the roads are dry and hard, and there is not a single cool, pleasant thing on which to rest the eye. Involuntarily I sigh. Father hears me and sighs also.

Do what we will, we are a doleful couple.

Suddenly there comes the well-known rat-tat at the door. In another minute, a maid brings me a letter bearing a country postmark. I opened it hurriedly. It is from Clare Harrison, an old schoolfellow of mine, asking us to go and stay with her, for what is generally known by the name of the Quantock week.

"I want to introduce you to the Devon and Somerset staghouuds," she wound up by saying.

My whole face must have changed, for even father, with his poor dim eyes, noticed its altered expression.

"Why, Norah," he said, "what is it?"

And then I tell him. He, too, is pleased at the thought of getting into the country.

"Would you like to go, child?" he asked.

"Oh! yes, father, if—if we can manage it."

"The journey will be rather expensive, I'm afraid."

"But we shall save in other ways," I said eagerly. "There will be no meals to pay for."

"Won't you want all sorts of new frocks and fal-lals, Norah?"

"No," resolutely; "I shall do without them."

And so it is settled, and I retire to my little, dark back bedroom, which looks out over the leads, and inspect my wardrobe. Thank goodness, I kept one habit, when I parted with all the others. It is not very new, but it will answer the purpose. As for frocks—well, I never troubled my head much about clothes in Ireland, and they are all very shabby and very, very old-fashioned. Clare is a smart dresser; she was always fond of finery, even in our school-days. I shall look a regular dowdy beside her. But it can't be helped. And then I take a surreptitious peep in the glass, and ask myself whether by any chance a pair of dark blue Irish eyes, with very long black lashes, can atone for the deficiencies of my toilet.

I live in a fever of excitement, until the day arrives for our departure.

Oh! how beautiful the fields look! how fresh and green! Papa lets down the window of our railway-carriage, and gazes dreamily out at the sun-kissed landscape. It is hot, and the cattle are everywhere congregated under the trees, where they stand stamping their feet and switching their long tails. The corn yellows in the sunshine, and light cloud-shadows steal gently over half-ripe heads of wheat and barley. A smile of satisfaction rises to father's face. The very sight of it makes me happy.

Our journey continued without interruption until we arrived at Taunton. There we alighted, hunted after the luggage, pushed our way through crowds of holiday-makers, tempted by the fine weather, and changed into another train, due to arrive at the little wayside station where we were to descend.

We had just got comfortably settled in our new compartment when the door flew open and a gentleman stepped in. Now the Britisher on his travels is peculiar. The entry of a stranger into his particular carriage generally rouses his resentment. That feeling gives way to one of passive endurance, which, in its turn, is succeeded by a certain amount of curiosity. After a while, I glanced at the new-comer. He was a tall, well-built man, with clear hazel eyes, that were calm in expression but very penetrating, as I discovered to my cost; for he intercepted my glance and covered me with confusion. He might have been thirty or thirty-five years of age; but his face was so grave, that no doubt he looked older than he really was. Somehow, he inspired me with interest. I felt that I should like to know more about him, and learn the reason of his seriousness. But we did not speak, and buried ourselves behind our several books and newspapers.

At length we reached our destination, where a wagonette awaited us.

"Do you came from Knapton Hall, my man?" asked father of the coachman.

"Yes, sir. Mr. Harrison has sent a cart for the luggage, because there is another gentleman to come up as well."

Another gentleman! I looked around and saw our travelling companion gathering up his belongings on the platform. When he had seen them in safe custody, he advanced towards the carriage and said to father, "I believe we are all bound for the same destination."

Whereupon he seated himself by my side, and entered into a desultory conversation with father, which lasted until we reached Knapton Hall.

Another minute, and I was pounced upon by Clare, who, after sundry embraces, carried me off to my room.

"Just fancy your coming up with dear old Dismal!" she exclaimed. "How funny!"

"Who is dear old Dismal, Clare?" I said laughingly. "The coachman who drove us, the horse who pulled us, or the gentleman who accompanied us?"

"Why, the gentleman, of course. How stupid you are, Norah!"

"Very likely. London smuts have an exceedingly demoralizing effect upon the intellect. But you have aroused my curiosity. Is Dismal the real name of our travelling-companion?"

Clare went off into a peal of laughter, which struck me as being a little exaggerated.

"Oh! dear, no. That's only a nickname we girls have bestowed upon him."

"For what reason? To my mind he looks neither so old nor yet so melancholy as to deserve the sobriquet."

Clare grew suddenly serious.

"You're right, Norah. And don't imagine that I wish to insinuate a word against Lawrence Carruthers. He is one of the best and nicest men I know, but——" turning very red.

"But what, Clare? Go on; I'm interested."

"Well, the fact of the matter is, I feel a wee bit afraid of him. You see, I'm volatile. I can't help being volatile; it's my nature. Nevertheless I like Mr. Carruthers extremely."

"Oh! you do, do you?"

"Yes, but what's the good? I always have a horrid sort of feeling that he disapproves of me."

"That's not likely, Clare."

"I don't know. Sometimes I think I should hate the man, if I were not so sorry for him." And she clenched her fist with unusual determination.

I began to scent a romance, and pressed for further information.

"Why should you be sorry for Mr. Carruthers?" I asked.

"Because, about four years ago, he was engaged to a very beautiful girl—a Miss Wickham. They were to have been married in a week, and all the preparations were made for the marriage. He was desperately in love, and she eloped with young Lord Walton at the last moment. Poor Lawrence was terribly cut up, and he has never been quite the same since."

"In what way, Clare? You don't mean to say that he is that *rara avis*, a constant man, and mourns for the old love instead of consoling himself with the new?"

"I don't know; but he shuts himself up, avoids women's society, and hardly goes anywhere, except here. He is, however, passionately fond of hunting, and the Quantock week is an inducement for him to emerge from his shell."

I went up to my friend, and laying both hands on her shoulders, looked her straight in the face.

"Clare," I said, "have you anything to tell me—anything I may congratulate you upon?"

The colour rushed to her cheeks in one bright wave.

"No," she stammered. "N—not yet."

"But there may be?"

"I—I don't know; sometimes I fancy so."

"And you like him, Clare? You would take him if he asked you?"

"Yes," she murmured under her breath. "I love him very dearly; but I'm afraid—I'm afraid he does not care about me."

I said no more. I had learned Clare's secret, and respected it.

At dinner I was seated between Mr. Harrison and Mr. Carruthers.

After what my friend had told me, I naturally desired to pass judgment on the latter. Mr. Harrison began asking me questions as to the state of things in Ireland, and unconsciously I gave a moving account of the sufferings of the landlords, and of my father in particular. Before long Mr. Carruthers joined in the conversation, and, to my surprise, he possessed a profound knowledge of the subject, and was evidently an exceedingly intelligent and well-informed man. I experienced none of that fear from which poor Clare professed to suffer, and by the end of dinner we had become quite good friends. I should have been entirely at my ease, had it not been for a consciousness that every now and again Clare's eyes were fixed upon me with a slightly wistful expression.

Directly the ladies retired, she came bustling up to me and said:

"Oh, Norah! I must congratulate you on being the only young lady of my acquaintance who has ever succeeded in making Lawrence Carruthers talk."

I thought she did him an injustice, and told her so. Poor Clare! it was her over-anxiety which placed her at a disadvantage in the presence of the man she loved. But I didn't want to increase the poor girl's troubles by flirting with her lover, and presently I

began talking about the next day's meet—a subject which just then lay much nearer my heart.

"Am I really to go out?" I asked with incredulous delight.

"Of course," Clare answered. "We have got you a good stout cob. Not having ridden for so long, I thought you would prefer something quiet."

"Quite right. I don't want to disgrace myself before a 'Zoometershire' public. Where does my steed hail from?" I was in the wildest spirits, and made no effort to control them.

"From Taunton; but I must confess to knowing nothing about him. There is such a demand for horses during this particular week, that one is fortunate in securing any sort of an animal."

Presently the gentlemen appeared, and I was sent off to the piano and made to sing some of papa's favourite ballads. Mr. Carruthers listened attentively, and with every sign of approval. I wished he would go and talk to Clare; but when I had done singing, he came and sat by my side and remained there until it was bedtime.

Next morning we were up betimes, and at half-past ten the horses came round to the door. Papa and Mrs. Harrison had settled to drive; the rest of the party were equipped for riding.

I looked at my cob with the eye of a connoisseur. He was a fat, demure chestnut, with a long tail, thick neck, and shaggy mane. He might have good qualities, but he did not convey the impression of possessing any particular speed. Mr. Carruthers punched his sides, and remarked that he appeared wholly wanting in condition, which was precisely the opinion I had arrived at.

"Never fear," responded the groom in attendance, "he'll carry the young lady like a bird."

Mr. Carruthers shook his head doubtfully, but said nothing. Being now mounted, we all commenced the ascent of the steep hill that led up to the open moor. When we reached its summit, a beautiful scene presented itself. Undulating masses of purple heather stretched in all directions, bright with blossom and elastic to the tread. Green, many-foliaged coombes lay in the valleys and nestled on the slopes of the hills; whilst beyond shimmered a placid blue sea, kissed into a myriad diamonds by the summer sunshine. The air was warm yet bracing; it was a pleasure to human lungs to breathe its pure ozone. Dozens of vehicles of every description were already drawn up in position. The ground was carpeted with white tablecloths and huge wicker luncheon-baskets. It resembled a gigantic picnic; and every single person present appeared brimming over with fun, geniality, and an innate love of sport.

The tufters were put into covert, and a long period of inaction ensued, whilst slowly but surely they were doing their work. It was known that the harbourer had harboured a warrantable stag overnight. At length a stir took place amongst the crowd.

Horsemen began to gallop to and fro. Before long the excitement grew intense. Word shortly came that Arthur, the huntsman, was already on his way back to certain farm-buildings where the body of the pack was safely shut up. At this moment I, in common with my companions, went sneaking off in order to secure a good start. The proceeding was unsportsmanlike, but I followed the majority. A little confusion now occurred, until the pack, emerging from their prison, were laid on the scent. Then the great liver and white, twenty-six inch hounds trailed over the heather (not quite in the same compact order as foxhounds), and we galloped after them as hard as we could; for though they may not seem to travel very fast, the pace is deceptive.

My blood began to course like wild-fire through my veins. The passion of the chase was upon me. I felt I would rather die than be left behind and not keep up with that crowd of galloping horsemen. But it was terribly mortifying to find my rotund chestnut labour along in a clumsy, floundering fashion, whilst all my chirrups and most energetic invocations failed to increase his speed. Clare sailed past me on her wiry little thoroughbred bay, going two strides to my one. I envied her her mount, and broke the Tenth Commandment on the spot.

And now we began to "sink a coombe"—that, I am informed, is the correct way of expressing the process. It was very steep, but the chestnut and I managed to slither down somehow. He was sure-footed, and knew how to use his hocks. Hope revived within my breast; for a few brief seconds triumph even took its place. Arthur was close ahead, and I could hear the hounds baying in front of me. Alas! I forgot that the opposite hill must all be laboriously climbed.

The gallant chestnut plunged through a rocky river-bed and almost tumbled on to his nose. I shortened my bridle and urged him to his speed. He responded gaily, and we commenced the ascent at a brisk canter. Fifty yards, however, brought him to a trot. He was thick in the wind and very fat. I seized a lock of his plentiful mane—it was harsh and bristly—and stood up in the stirrup, so as to relieve his hind-quarters of my weight. The path was very narrow. There was really only room for one person at a time, but people jostled past me with and without apology. I felt indignant and annoyed by turns, but I could not keep my place, do what I would. Another hundred yards and old Slow-coach subsided into a walk, and I could hear his poor heart beating under me like a sledge-hammer. Still we toiled up, up, up. It was dreadful work, and rendered still worse by the fact that the hounds had long since reached the summit, and were streaming away on a burning scent. I thought regretfully of the horses I used to ride in Ireland—the wild, fast, semi-broken things—and wished for any one of them.

A mad desire to get on infuriated me. I grew callous. It

sounds horrible in a woman, but I lost all mercy. I kicked the chestnut quite hard with my heel, jobbed him in the mouth, and even applied my hunting-crop to his streaming sides. Poor beast! he would have gone faster if he could.

The sun was very hot. Every minute it seemed to grow hotter. My face was scarlet; as for the cob, he was bathed in perspiration, whilst his distended nostrils, outstretched neck and drooping head told too plainly that his bolt was shot.

By the time we had clambered up the rocky, winding path, forced our way through low-drooping branches, and once more gained the heather, the wretched animal was reduced almost to a standstill. I was fiercely, desperately disappointed. The hard-riding division were far ahead, galloping straight on in the direction of the sea. In a very few minutes I was passed by the whole heterogeneous crowd of men and women, and found myself with a beaten horse alone on the wide moor. You who have never been placed in a similar position may laugh at me if you like, but, speaking from experience, the situation is by no means pleasant.

I stood there quite still, allowing the unhappy cob to get his wind, and waiting till the jerkings of his heart grew less distressingly apparent. No traces of the hunt were to be seen by this time. Then I formed a desperate resolve, and determined to go straight on *somewhere*.

I had not an idea where I was. Bumping over the heather on a rough and thoroughly tired-out animal is a fatiguing process. Very soon a sad conviction forced itself upon my mind that I, too, was dreadfully out of condition. One of the elastic straps in my skirt gave way. It caused me infinite trouble; for, do what I would, the skirt no longer kept in its place.

It is the last straw that breaks the camel's back. I know it sounds utterly ridiculous, but at this final disaster, a sense of horrible desolation overwhelmed me, and, dropping the reins on the cob's neck, I began to sob like a child.

When I recovered sufficient self-possession to look around, to my intense discomfiture, I perceived a horseman close at hand; but my discomfiture changed to amazement when I saw that he was Mr. Carruthers.

"Hulloa!" he exclaimed cheerily. "Why, what's the matter?"

I don't think I ever felt so deadly ashamed of myself in all my life.

"My horse is beat," I said sheepishly, "and I can't get on; and—and—where's everybody?"

"Everybody's not very far off," he answered with a smile. "The stag has taken to the sea."

"I suppose you have had a splendid run, Mr. Carruthers?"

"Oh! dear, no. Don't vex yourself on that account; you have missed nothing. But what a shame to send you out on such a

horse! I knew he would not be able to gallop when I saw him this morning. That's why I came to look for you."

A flush rose to my cheek.

"*Did* you come and look for me on purpose, Mr. Carruthers?" stealing a shy glance at him from under my eyelashes.

"Yes. I missed you after a bit, so thought I would institute a search; and as things have turned out, I'm very glad I did."

I held my peace; for, big goose as I was, and base traitor to Clare, I felt a thrill of pleasure shoot through my frame. He was so manly and self-contained, that I could not help liking him.

"Are you afraid to go down rather an awkward place, Miss O'Brian?" he asked presently.

I detest that word *afraid*; I've always detested it since I was a baby.

"No; not a bit," I answered with returning spirit.

But the path was even rougher than I bargained for. Great stones and layers of natural rock rendered it extremely bad "going." Mr. Carruthers led the way on his good grey. I followed in single file, my cob slipping cautiously down on his hind-quarters. We had almost reached the road at the bottom, when suddenly he made a bad peck, half recovered himself, stumbled again, and finally rolled heavily on to his side, pinning me beneath him. Mr. Carruthers was off his horse in a second.

"Are you hurt?" he inquired anxiously.

"No—o; I don't think so." But I was not sure, all the same.

The chestnut scrambled to his feet, and I tried to follow suit; but my right ankle hurt so badly that I would have fallen to the ground had not Mr. Carruthers held me up in his strong arms. For a moment our eyes met, and again that curious thrill went through me.

"You can't walk?" he said.

"No; I fear not. My ankle is sprained."

Mr. Carruthers looked grave.

"There is an inn close by," he said, after a momentary pause.

"Do you think you could sit your horse for a hundred yards or so, if I walk by your side and lead him?"

"Yes; I will try, at any rate."

"That's right." And so saying he lifted me up into the saddle as if I were a child. I had never felt so deliciously weak in all my life—I, who was generally considered rather a strong-minded young person; but the events of the day had rendered me very grateful for a protector.

We reached the inn without further mishap. Then Mr. Carruthers said:

"And now, Miss O'Brian, I'll go and find your father. I saw Mrs. Harrison's carriage a short while ago, and no doubt she will drive you home."

Shall I confess it? I was thoroughly disappointed. I had

taken the idea into my head that he himself would escort me back to Knapton Hall.

I was laid up for a whole fortnight, and, in spite of my sprained ankle, the time passed very pleasantly. The Harrisons were more than kind; whilst Mr. Carruthers, who had only come for a week, stayed on in a most unaccountable manner.

He was very good to me; so good that every time a tap came at the door, or I heard his footstep outside in the passage, my heart began to beat and the tell-tale blood flew to my cheeks.

Just a fortnight! And yet how it changed me! I jumped from a girl into a woman, full of secret, unsatisfied longings.

We are going back to town—to the London sparrows and the London blacks. My heart faints at the prospect, but we can no longer trespass on Mr. and Mrs. Harrison's hospitality. I try to appear indifferent, and to hide my real feelings. *They* are very sad ones; for by nightfall we shall be far away, and Lawrence Carruthers has never even asked if he may come and see us when he visits London in the winter. I begin to think I have been a terrible fool; and then Clare—but I dare not think of her. A barrier seems to have grown up between us, and I feel responsible for its existence. So I muse disconsolately. A slight noise attracts my attention. I look up, and Lawrence—I mean Mr. Carruthers—is by my side.

There is an expression on his face which sets my pulses throbbing, and a wild expectancy seizes me.

"I have come to wish you good-bye," he says with outward calm, "and have therefore stolen a march over my host and hostess."

My nerves are overstrung; I am not myself. It becomes harder and harder to act one's part with propriety.

"Good-bye," I echo satirically. "You seem in a great hurry to get rid of us. Our train does not go for another hour; but I suppose you wish to speed the parting guest."

"Do you believe what you say?" he asks, looking me steadily in the face with his clear orbs.

I cannot endure this gaze. My eyes droop before his.

"Yes, of course I do." But the words come forth lame and halting.

"Then you are wrong in your conclusion, Miss O'Brian. Will you answer me one question?"

"What is it?" And my heart leaps with delight.

"Are you sorry to leave Knapton?"

My disappointment is so great that I have hard work to conceal it. He is playing with me, as a cat plays with a mouse.

"You have no right to ask," I reply brusquely, trying to guard

my pitiful secret. "What can it matter to you?" giving my head a defiant backward toss.

A light blazes up into his face, and literally transforms it. He looks simply grand.

"It matters a great deal. I cannot part from you as from a stranger. I cannot say good-bye unless you give me some hope that we may meet again. For this reason I have sought you out now, and in order to know my fate."

Good God! it has come. My brain reels, my eyes grow dim; my whole being thrills in response to his words, and yet I can only stammer, "What—what do you mean?"

"Mean!" he cries passionately: "that I love you; that I want you to be my wife; that I cannot and will not lose you, Norah darling;" and he holds out his arms. "Won't you come? Have you nothing to tell me on your side?"

I cannot speak. My heart is full to overflowing; but he looks into my eyes, and there he sees all that he wants to know.

My happiness would have been perfect but for the thoughts of Clare. Conscience troubled me sorely, and the worst of it was I could not confide my anxieties to Lawrence. There was but little time left for action. I took a bold step, however, and before we said good-bye to Knapton Hall confessed all, with deepest contrition and humility.

"Clare," I said, "I have been a brute, but indeed—indeed I did not mean to be one. I could not help being fond of him; it was stronger than myself. I thought to have crept away from here, and never said a word; but when he spoke, then all my good resolves vanished. Can you ever forgive me?"

She was a dear, good girl. She listened to my tale in silence, and, when I had done, said softly:

"Don't blame yourself, Norah. He cared for you, and he didn't for me. There's nothing more to be said; and it was my own fault for being so foolish."

"Oh no, Clare, dear Clare, don't say that. You are worthier of him than I."

She turned to me with a smile, which rendered every feature beautiful:

"Worthy or not worthy, may God bless him. I am glad he is happy; and as for myself, it does not signify."

They were simple words, but they touched me to the quick. I folded her in my arms and kissed her again and again.

Happy? Yes, he—we are very, very happy. Sometimes I tremble at our joy. When I look around me in the world, and see all the miserable marriages, the ill-assorted couples, and the hopeless wretchedness of husband and wife, then I thank God on my bended knees for the mercies vouchsafed to me.

And father is better—much better. The operation was per-

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formed successfully, and he has almost recovered the use of his eyes.

Lawrence talks of doing up Castle O'Brian, and of our all going to live there in the summer months. When my baby is born, I hope it may open its tiny eyes on our old home, and see the bright beautiful Shannon rolling on towards the ocean. And some day, Lawrence declares, we shall go out hunting again with the Devon and Somerset staghounds during the Quantock week; but he vows he will take precious good care to mount me on something better than the chestnut cob.

But all the same that worthy animal occupies a sacred place in my memory; for if it had not been for him, I might never have won my dear, dear husband.

CUPID IN CABLE CHAINS.

By WILTON WOLRIGE,
AUTHOR OF "AN UGLY MUG," ETC.

EIGHT bells had struck, and the stout weather-worn timbers of the three-decked old hulk, the "Bellerophon," had swung to the tide for the third time during the past eighteen hours.

It had been a cloudless and consequently a proportionally hot day, late in August. The old ship lay on the banks of the Medway, close to a quaint old country town; and because there was nothing in the shape of amusement ashore, and partly perhaps on account of the heat, the commander, who was newly appointed to the training vessel, had fretted himself into an exceedingly bad humour.

Irritation was stamped on each and all of his well-cut features as he reclined on the locker-cushions in the after part of his tastefully furnished saloon. His handsome head protruded, for a lack of fresh air, out of one of the nearest port-holes, a frame somewhat too well fitting, it so chanced, for as his pet and most ungainly *dachshund* bounced up beside him and startled him out of his day-dreams he withdrew his gaze so rapidly from the placid harbour to the interior of his cabin, that he secured a fresh instalment of headache unto himself by coming into close quarters with the deck above where the beams shelved down so low to the mahogany lockers.

And then for what were you not answerable, you liver-coloured, splay-footed, yet most thorough-bred Jingo?

For this post-captain's language at once became most unparliamentary, and he invoked anything but loyal blessings upon the heads (long laid low in the dust) of departed royalty.

"Why, oh! why were the 'tween-decks' beams so low? Why did her present most gracious Majesty allow such tumble-to-pieces old hulks to exist? They should be chopped up for matchwood! It was just the false policy of the Government, who before long, would send the English navy to the dogs, just as long ago (as doughty old warriors would have us believe) a certain other good service had gone;" and much more to the same effect.

A silence ensued, during which Captain Carruthers imagined himself more at ease while pacing the cabin floor, much as he would the quarter-deck, to and fro like a panther trapped in a cage. Suddenly he broke out again, finding a safety-valve for his spleen in angry ejaculations and divers unwarrantable statements, some of which were to the effect that the Liberals were delighted to think they might, unchallenged, represent that Britannia no

longer now, as of yore, ruled the waves, but sat at home, a weak and spiritless being, a thimble for her helmet, a knitting-needle as her trident, and that her merciful and extended hand was withdrawn, or only put forth to persecute with unkindly attention such small fry as the luckless crofters upon a small island of which we all wot.

"Drop it, Carruthers. Neither God nor men intended red-hot politics for a broiling summer's day," said a deep voice, arisen apparently from the depth of the sea through the open port-holes; but the commander appeared neither surprised nor disconcerted, but, on the contrary, he began another long tirade, after which the fresh voice broke in more wakefully, and a burly form rose as a giant refreshed from a huge double-ended sofa, in which it had been so buried that any casual observer entering the cabin would not at first have seen the second occupant, sheltered under the high back of the couch which presented itself to the door side of the cabin.

This was the Hon. Bertie Staunton, who was commonly nicknamed B. and S., for which compound of fluids he had an unfortunate and unwholesome fondness. He was one of those of whom the world speaks as "a man's man" and "a thorough good fellow, who was no one's enemy save his own," which almost invariably means that such an one has done or will do eight times as much mischief in this life to those who chance to be brought into intimate relation with him than ninety-nine men out of a hundred possessed of less charming qualities.

"You're a nice beggar, Carruthers," quoth he, "to ask a fellow to luncheon, and then fall to and revile the service he is in and the politics he prefers, and vent your rage till you make the poor chap feel like a limp rag on this grilling afternoon;" and here he fixed his eyes, which were of the palest blue, with a dejected air upon his host.

Those orbs of his were a source of vast annoyance to him, owing to the chaff they entailed upon their owner. They were, indeed, of the most watery blue, and voted by many to out-rival the complexion of any suburban milkman's best skim.

His friends, however, were agreed that he could see rather further through the affairs of life in general than many men who were the proud possessors of deeper-coloured pupils. Be that as it may, Carruthers and he were on very good terms, and the captain laughed heartily, half his ill-temper gone, at this turning of the tables upon him by his easy-going chum.

"I like your assurance, sir!" said he. "Here you speak of being my guest; and you must allow a self-invited one, since you force yourself daily almost upon the ship for sustenance between one-thirty and two, after which you retire and rack every plank in the vessel from stem to stern with your snores, after discussing no one can safely say how many different decoctions."

"It is hot, by Jove! and I *was* thirsty," declared the warrior from the sofa, with a regretful look at the vast number of "dead marines," a sight to have rejoiced the heart of Bacchus himself, while Carruthers' modest bottle of iced ciaret lay at hand, but half drunk still.

The time-worn joke of an empty bottle being like a marine, because having done its duty once it is ready to do it again, appears about the only compliment which sailors ever vouchsafe to that amphibious branch of the service. Jack himself disposes of the marine private as a "jolly."

A marine may be a mighty big man in barracks, but once afloat he is simply nowhere. And yet they are a magnificent body of men, and their motto quite one of the best in the army.

"Tea?" asked Carruthers, with his hand upon the bell. "It may make you hotter at first, but it is far more thirst-quenching than gin and ginger-beer, cocktails, almighty enliveners, and Heaven alone knows what besides, if you'd only believe it, Bertie."

"Calm your own nerves with it, and get cool in more senses than one, my dear fellah," from Mr. Staunton, with a stretch. "Confess, now, you've been a bit riled, as the Yanks. say. You are a charming chap, I allow, for a spree in cold weather; but in warm you are too, too intense, too—energetic."

"There's nothing to become energetic about," said the captain, "in this dull place. One High Street, one tennis-court with low wire fencing, and all the yokels of the village staring in; and then the tennis-players themselves—gracious powers! ugly as sin, and too old to run to the balls when they are served, the antiquated chessboards!"

"*How* much?" asked Staunton; but his friend was far too excited at the thought of his wrongs to be even aware he was addressed.

"Yes; and here am I booked for three years—I, who like a sea-going ship, shut up in this old hulk with four of quite the most idiotic officers that fortune has favoured the navy with."

"Exchange," quoth his oracle from the sofa.

"Not I, after accumulating all this trash," his outstretched arm comprehensively demonstrating his statuettes, flower-stands, and *bric-à-brac* generally—articles never sought in shops by masculine purchasers. "Five maiden aunts—from whom, by the way, I expect more than probably I shall ever get—have set me up as their idol *pro tem.*, you know, and furnished the place artistically. Pardon, my dear boy, but you are taking the pristine freshness from out their best antimacassar; allow me! Their delight at present is unbounded at having me within ten miles ken of them. Shall I, then, expose my feet of clay, and fall from my pedestal in the niche of their wills, where I fondly believe I

am enshrined? Not I," impressively, and sitting down, his now jovial sun-burnt face betwixt his hands, his elbows on the table—"while a shot remains in their locker."

"You bet!" said Staunton, who, far too exhausted to demonstrate any surprise at this new phase in his friend's character, calculative worldliness, had fallen back on the sofa and was leisurely surveying the cabin with a fresh interest now that he heard it had not been dressed by the officials attached to the Admiralty stores.

A tap, and the panelled door opened to admit a stalwart blue-jacket, who saluted as he presented himself, handed a telegram to his captain, and reported several signals made from the Italian corvette in the harbour to the "Bellerophon." He called it "Bullyruffian," but that is a detail.

"Umph!" growled Carruthers, whose wrath was still bottled up, and at any moment the cork might fly. "Carry on, lad;" and then the lad, who was a brawny seaman standing five feet eleven in his stockings, gave another salute and carried himself away.

"How on earth those fellows understand such lingo," said Staunton, who was a feather-bed warrior, nevertheless possessed of fine soldierly instincts which impelled him to have a laugh at the sister service whenever he got a square chance, "I never could make out."

Here two other sailors, after preliminary taps, came in and reported various trifles to the commander, whose fury now knew no bounds.

"And where, pray," he asked, "was Mr. Mannering, the lieutenant on duty that afternoon, if he was to be troubled like this?"

"Oh! he had gone forrard, had he, to receive the second gig, which had just come off with visitors? Two ladies and a gentleman? Oh, well!" And then came the inevitable phrase—the lads could carry on.

"But I'll put a stop to this," said this irate young captain to Staunton. "You see I am not far senior to Mannering, who time to time has lost months of seniority, and he thinks he can heave some of his work on to my shoulders; however, we will see about that."

Up he jumped, banged open wide the cuddy-door, much to the horror of the sentry behind it, who was endeavouring to extract from pressure on his musket what Staunton had succeeded in getting out of his comfortable sofa—an afternoon nap.

"Sentry," quoth the commander, "it's about time you were off," looking at the man's half-closed eyes. "Tell the guard who relieves you not to let a man jack pass this cabin-door. Mr. Mannering is on duty."

Saying which, in he bounced again. He certainly was in an execrable mood that afternoon.

"It's a pity now," said Staunton, his pale eyes widely opened,

"that you don't like Mannering. He is not a bad chap when all is said and done; and his cousins, they are pretty girls, if you like, about the nicest in the county."

"Did not know he had any," answered the captain, puffing lazily at his cigar. "But he is always having some one about the ship, hang him!—widows and what not. I've only been on board a week, yet I am aware of that; still I never heard they were cousins, nor yet that they were pretty."

"Not know it?" cried Staunton. "Why, man alive, you've got one of the girls' likenesses upon that bracket there in a silver frame;" and his blue eyes dilated to such an extent that they looked more like crackled blue china cups in white saucers than ordinary organs of vision.

"That," said the post-captain, who was a frank-spoken seaman, with an honest blush which mantled through all the bronze on his cheeks and gave emphasis as to the truth of his statement, "that is *not* a girl who lives hereabouts, and her name is Miss—or Mrs. Smith."

"Since when have you known this divinity," demanded Staunton, "that you enshrine her in silver, and yet do not know if the idol has the ineffable joy of possessing a lord and master or none? And so her name is Smith—common vulgar Smith?"

"They spell it with a Y, my lord," laughed Carruthers, to turn the subject. "Why not?—just as Mr. Weller loved best to spell his name with a V."

"Old man," said Staunton sagely, "why deceive or rather attempt to hoodwink yours very truly? Believe me, dear boy, those well-bred little hands, that daintiness from *petite* nose to *petite* toes, were never united so happily in the person of any descendant of that illustrious yet widely scattered family, the Smiths."

"Nonsense!" from the commander obstinately. "These people are Smythes, and they come from Essex."

To which his friend responded with great vulgarity, "You tell that to the marines, Carruthers."

Now again that phrase, inadvertently dropped by my pen, denotes the contemptuous little pleasantries indulged in all the world over in speaking of that valiant body of men. Why, pray, should they be thought capable of believing things and assertions that no one else by any possibility can be brought to accept as solid truth?

"You tell that to the marines," said he, letting his eyes, which had now begun to button themselves up again, travel listlessly round, from chair-backs, sofa-cushions and tablecloth to the cabin window. Yes, even the shelf beneath it was adorned with a silken thing, in crewel or cross-stitch, or goodness alone knew what.

Was it possible that five maiden aunts, with their united industrious digits, could have worked all these fal-lals in a lifetime?

He lay back with his gaze full upon the photo of that young lady, whose forbears, his host had just assured him, lived in Essex, glanced at Carruthers and shook his head, and then actually set to work upon a problem as to how many fingers five maiden aunts might safely be supposed to possess, and how much fancy work might be calculated upon from their untiring exertions.

And then a stupendous thing happened in the very midst of his cogitations, and just as the captain was about to declare his headache cured by the cup of strong tea which steamed hot and sweet before him; for suddenly a rumbling, rolling noise began overhead on the upper deck, gradually dying away, but anon coming back with a mighty roar just over where the captain's sacred cabin lay. Even lazy Staunton sat up and said, "By gad!" in long-drawn syllables, and the captain's face was a study. Had he been a German, he would have sworn sundry and manifold strange oaths; an Irishman, and he would have invoked all the saints in the calendar to bear witness to his wrongs; but as he was a British-born seaman, he whipped out one very big word, and then, "Come up, Staunton," said he. "I'll teach these lads to begin their holystoning at five on a summer's evening."

But Staunton, with an air of intense weariness, begged to be excused. "You'll make it all right, old fellow: it is so hot, and there is that companion-ladder to climb. If I could save you the trouble, I'd go like a bird; but as I can't, I'll stay where I am," said he, who would not have jumped a gate on a warm day to save his best friend, presuming that friend to be in a plight regarding small obstacles, as a bull or a piece of water, and again always presuming the man in question could swim or run; for Staunton, with all his faults, was nothing if not heartily good-natured.

He called to Carruthers as he left the cabin, "Hey, captain! how about a sail in the launch? It would suit us both, and it's going to be a lovely evening."

Carruthers' curly head peeped in again, "Ay, ay, sir!" he cried, just as his own sailors would have made answer to him, to the amusement of the sentry, who was fresh enough to grin in a respectful but appreciative manner at this stern-faced sailor having his little joke.

Up dashed the commander to the upper deck, his peaked cap tilted slightly towards his nose to enable him to see more clearly through the shafts of late-afternoon sunlight which were still streaming down upon the old craft, and dwelt lingeringly upon his tall form as he stood there in all his bravery of blue cloth and gold braid, brought out too into strong relief his dark strong face well set upon the noble column of his throat, while a soft westerly breeze entangled itself in his moustache, and since he must needs sacrifice the first unless he grew the other, within the meshes of his small dark beard.

This beard was in matters of difficulty his greatest stand-by; he;

stroked it when sorely perplexed, and if inspiration did not follow, a sharp tug usually brought about the desired acumen.

Imagine the anguish of the commander, whose love of discipline was unique, when he noted that the sun illumined not only his vessel and the deep blue waters around it, but beamed just as warmly upon a sad and sorry sight, which consisted of nothing less than some three hundred sailor-boys, their ages averaging sixteen years and upwards, sitting unshod and stockingless in various attitudes amongst the lower rattlins of the rigging and sails, which they had evidently been having a lesson in manipulating.

He could see nothing to account for the supposed holystoning, and yet the splay mouths of the sailor-lads, as they looked down from their coign of 'vantage, widely spread in appreciative silence, showed the commander that something was in the wind.

A moment more and he also saw three figures come flying up the long irregular deck, and the central form was that of his own first lieutenant, whose feet were also shod with roller-skates, while he supported on either side two sisters, either of whom might have sat for the portrait of Miss Smythe, of Essex; and a remarkably interesting trio these young people made.

But, gracious powers! roller-skating on board a man-o'-war! what next?

The two girls in their bright pink zephyr gowns lightened up the sombreness of the old training-ship; they were flushed with exercise, but not particularly hot from their exertions; and the commander, though he was not pleased at seeing his first lieutenant clad in uniform and skates, began to think the air on the upper deck was vastly pleasant, and coolness itself in comparison with that stuffy cabin of his below.

Was it the evening breeze, as it stirred softly yonder amongst the shrouds, or the advent of one of the pink-garbed maidens, which gladdened all his ardent nature, and impelled him to be as pleasant now as at first it was his intention to be thoroughly disagreeable?

There was a third stranger standing on the bridge, smoking and talking to the officer of the watch, and again every seaman-like instinct in Carruthers' breast rebelled in choler.

But the stranger was aged, and on comparing the two faces the captain discovered a marked resemblance in his aristocratic features to the more *riante* of the two sisters.

For there was but a slight distinction in the girls' faces, and that lay chiefly in expression; yet to the commander's credit be it spoken that he fell in love at sight with the younger, and never confused them together for one instant.

They were much of the same height, with the same slender figure, the same vivid yet tender colouring of face; yet the elder girl's face had a purity and saintliness not so visible in the younger, whose beauty was perhaps heightened to some extent by an irre-

sistible *diablerie*, which shone from the depths of her Irish eyes and twinkled in the three soft pitfalls dimpling in either cheek and chin. To the old general both were dearer than his own heart's blood that had ebbed on many a well-fought field after a hard-won day.

And then General Ingram was presented by Mannering as "My uncle" to the commander, while the old man introduced "My daughters, sir, and very pleased I am to make your acquaintance; known all your aunts for years, &c., &c."

And then Carruthers found that the tongue of his siren, the more roguish Miss Ingram, was telling him in soft accents how charming it was of him to permit skating on board, and how lucky it had been for them that he had no headachey wife below, who would have cried out about the noise overhead. And the other chimed in, "Yes, it had been delightful; not, of course, that the skating itself was good—the decks shelved so much that it was hard work, more like ploughing, in fact; still the air was so sweet and fresh up here, and altogether a sailor's life must be quite too charming."

To which Carruthers responded gravely that it was all very nice, but at times a trifle monotonous; and then he began to wonder how he could manage to slip away and remove a certain photograph bought three weeks since at the only studio of which the adjacent town could boast, since when he had never expected to see his divinity again.

Indeed, he had only met her twice—once at a county ball, and the second time at his aunt's garden party, where he had expected with certainty to procure an introduction.

But not a chance did he get of such a thing, though he pestered all five of his aunts most unmercifully.

"Nephew," said Lavinia, the most cautious, "believe, pray, that to all the *nice* girls you most certainly shall be introduced."

She did not add that the size of a girl's income was that by which her qualities were decided. So the day came and went, and no introduction ensued; and the most trying part of it all was that, whether Miss Ingram noticed him or not, she certainly gave him no assistance.

And here he suddenly found himself in smooth water, introduced and talking amiably and easily, marvelling to himself why he had been so cross and let that evil temper get the upper hand of him that day.

A few minutes later and he had won the general's good opinion, and arranged for a two hours' yachting excursion, which delighted the two girls, excused himself hastily, and run below to his cabin.

"Staunton," said he shamefacedly, and throwing his cap upon the table, and into it his gloves, and marching over to his friend, who had risen and between the puffs of a cigar was scrutinizing

the portrait of Miss or Mrs. Smythe—"Staunton, old boy, you don't mind a fairly big party in the launch, do you?"

"I don't know," drawled Staunton, unbuttoning one eye and fixing Carruthers with it. "The day is hot still, and that launch is precious small."

"Well, you see Mannerings's cousins are on board, and the father is a great friend of my aunts, you know," jerked out the wily commander; "and I want to do the civil thing—sociable meal after sail, see them ashore, and that."

"Name?" queried Staunton.

"General Ingram, you know."

"Oh, yes, I know both him and the girls," replied Staunton, opening the other eye and fixing Carruthers and the picture with his gaze alternately.

"Oh?" interrogatively.

"Yes."

"Pretty girls; the quiet one very interesting," said the captain.

"Yes, both are thought so. I should have fancied the more genial one your style, though," with a glance at the frame. "But they are wonderfully alike; in the old cathedral town where they were brought up, they are still remembered as 'the curricie pair.'"

"By Jove," after a pause, "he will be a lucky dog, the fellow who gets either of those girls to run in double harness with himself! Ah, well," with a sigh, "some people are blind enough not to know them apart. One cousin, who had not seen them for years, put up his glass and said—confound the beggar's cheek!—'And which is Kate, and which is Flora?'"

"You know their names?"

"So."

"Then," said the captain, sturdily, "which, may I ask, *is* Kate, and which is Flora?"

"Kate is the quiet one; Flora more like your friend Miss Smythe."

With this parting shaft he withdrew, Carruthers calling out to say he would be with him "in a jiffy."

Five minutes later Staunton, returning to his friend's deserted cabin, noted how the silver frame hung in its place, but was desecrated by the picture of a prize mastiff in lieu of the dainty head which previously adorned it.

"By Jove, the plot thickens!" cried Staunton, dancing an impromptu breakdown, all alone as he was.

The Ingram girls declared the evening sail to be quite as grand a success as the skating had been.

Even quiet Kate assured Staunton, her liquid violet eyes lifted to his own, that she had never enjoyed herself more.

And then the foolish fellow made instant resolutions of amending his ways. How easy, he thought, a respectable life would be if only a man could for ever be yachting with a saint on a sea of glory.

His pale eyes became illumined with the light of the sun going down, a blazing ball of gold, behind the grey blue clouds.

The sails flapped to and fro at intervals, revealing the general in close converse with an old salt, one of the six men-o'-war's men who manned the launch, and who was thereby the richer by some pipes of tobacco.

The commander managed the helm, and Dora, laughing and happy, sat beside him. There is good reason to believe that she considered herself especially well favoured by that very fickle Dame Fortune on that particular afternoon.

Then the simple dinner in the captain's saloon, with only the general to act as chaperone, was voted a grand success, and the dreadful steward's concoction of coffee was sent away; while the still more frightful board-a-ship tea, which I have good reason to believe is made in one huge seething-pot to accommodate no one can say how many thirsty folk, and which tastes like iron castings carefully boiled down, was declared by both these feminine hypocrites to be as ambrosial nectar; but the general shook his head and growled, the captain decided against it, and a sad-coloured teapot being brought in, together with a shiny kettle, the two girls made the tea and felt themselves at home much as though these men had been their brothers, greatly to the commander's delight and the admiration of Staunton.

Poor Mr. Mannering, it was rather hard upon him assuredly down in the wardroom; but then, you see, he was on duty, and that our friend the disciplinarian never allowed to be shirked.

Two months later the first lieutenant might have been seen leaning against the bulwarks of the "Bellerophon" one Sunday, early in the afternoon. He had been ashore for service, so it was with some surprise that the commander met him on the gangway.

"Come aboard, sir," reported Mannering with sullen courtesy, but his teeth clenched as the words left his mouth.

After speaking, he hardly moved, but leaned against the old ship's side whilst Carruthers went to his gig to go ashore; and it was with misty eyes that Mannering watched it dance over the shining water and saw it land the captain on the jetty.

When once the commander was out of sight, the man's face grew pitifully white, and both his hands instinctively went up to shield it.

"I saw how it would be from the first," he said, hugging such cold comfort from that perspicacity.

For ashore, in the parish church that day he had heard the banns of marriage published between George Hastings Carruthers and Dora Doyne Ingram; also between—but no, that was a match which never came off!

And as this curriole pair were so extremely well matched to all outward seeming, there was a vestige of hope for poor Mannering still!

SISTER DORA.

By EMILIA AYLMER BLAKE (MRS. AYLMER GOWING).

How strange, in grimy Walsall's market place,
That marble likeness! 'Tis no warrior king
Or chief, but woman in her tender grace
And power to conquer human suffering.

'Tis Sister Dora; yes, that monument
For ever speaks a people's gratitude
For strength to tend the helpless nobly spent,
For spirit to their lowly wants subdued.

Her glorious form was dedicate to this
Great service—God alone e'er knew how much
Deep love she cast away—her sweet lips' kiss
Blest the poor leper none but she would touch;

Who cried in pain: "Kiss me before I die,
Sister"—and loving arms of pity cling
About him, loathsome, in his agony,
And soothe the death-throes to allay their sting.

"I see Him there, the gates are opened wide!"
Fell her last words, when faith was lost in sight,
And heaven received her as a virgin bride—
Yet here she speaks in marble pure and white.

And when the snow last winter hid the lands,
A second image showed in glittering frost
Heaped up and hewn by rough but loving hands,
That nursing mother whom the poor have lost.

The snows are melted 'neath the morning sun
And fled in water; yet the life of earth
Blooms fairer for such work as she has done
To raise the trampled seeds of heavenly birth.

A FALSE START.

By HAWLEY SMART.

AUTHOR OF "BREEZIE LANGTON," "BAD TO BEAT," "THE OUTSIDER," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER X.

THE GENERALS TAKE UMBRAGE.

MAURICE ENDERBY as he walked home revolved in his mind what Bob Grafton had told him. He did not know much about racing, but the merest neophyte could understand that to be halves in the winnings of a promising filly might run in time to a considerable amount of money. He was quite aware of the home truths that Grafton had set before him; young stock, for which almost fabulous prices have been paid constantly, never realize the expectations formed about them. This wedding gift of John Madingley's he quite understood might turn out a veritable Dead Sea apple. Sanguine as the Reverend John was about it at present, it might fulfil the destiny of many another high-bred horse, whose original owners dreamed of Derbys, Oaks, and Legers falling to their prowess, but whose humble career terminated in a hansom-cab. One thing flashed across Maurice Enderby. Should he dazzle his wife with a glimpse of the possible El Dorado that lay before them, or adhere to his original opinion that it might by good luck represent two or three hundred pounds, but was much more likely to result in a cheque for thirty or forty? No! he thought, I'll say nothing about it; poor girl! she is facing our narrow means with the greatest pluck—woman-like she would build a good deal upon this dubious future; better she should exult in the surprise than suffer the anguish of the disappointment.

By this time he had arrived at his own door, and, passing upstairs to the drawing-room, said cheerily as he entered it:

"Now, Bessie, if you have got a cup of tea for me give it to me and tell me what you have been about the whole afternoon."

"Not very much; General Maddox and his wife called, but, Maurice, I really cannot stand this; the insufferable way in which they patronize me, and the pompous arrogance with which they promised 'to do their best to make things pleasant for us' in Tunnleton, are really more than I can put up with. Did

General Maddox ever distinguish himself in any way that entitles him to give himself all these airs?"

"Distinguish himself!" said Maurice, "old Maddox did a tranquil round of staff and garrison duty for thirty odd years in the East. He never had but one active command, so I hear: it wasn't a very big thing, but a precious mess he made of it. One thing is certain, there were neither medals nor C.B.'s distributed for his little campaign."

"Then what does he take such very high ground about?"

"It's the old story, Bessie: Maddox, who is nobody, married a woman with a bit of money, and between his own pounds and what she brought him he is now a well-to-do man; indeed in Tunnleton he passes for more than that, is looked upon as wealthy. You can understand that an Anglo-Indian who has passed his life as a Jack-in-office cannot forego the custom of patronage. Here he is somebody, and aspires to be quite a leading magnate. Like the Tunnleton people generally, he believes the little place to be one of the world's centres, and further quite believes that he is one of its dictators. A case of Alcibiades' dog, my dear."

"I understand. I'm afraid in my capacity of the curate's wife I shall have to be civil, but I don't think I shall ever like either General or Mrs. Maddox."

"Not the slightest necessity you should; we must be civil to people who take the trouble to call on us, but there's no necessity for being intimate with them; as far as I have seen there is an amount of decorous dulness pervading the society of this place that must be endured, though it cannot be kicked against."

"Ah, well, never mind, Maurice; society is a very give-and-take game, and I have an idea that without the dull people it wouldn't knead together quite so pleasantly; clever men and women are a little given to want the whole platform to themselves. I once met a man with a great reputation as a conversationalist; he certainly was very amusing," continued Bessie, laughing; "he told some capital stories, and his remarks were brilliant and witty; but it was a monologue entertainment, very amusing for once, but it would become a little tiresome on repetition."

"We must make the best of things for the present; my intention is to stick to Tunnleton till a more favourable opportunity offers itself; if the place is a little dull, it is, at all events, a very fair curacy, and I'm well in the way to hear of anything better. Your uncle and god-father, John Madingley, might perhaps give me a lift. Grafton told me that he was a very well-known man, and on intimate terms with all sorts of swells. Your many-acred men and hereditary legislators constantly hold lots of Church patronage at their disposal, and I imagine that your uncle knows plenty of people of that sort."

"I'm sure I can't say," rejoined Bessie ; "I haven't seen him since I was a little girl, but I am aware that he is a very well known man."

"Yes ; and, judging from what Grafton told me, an excessively popular one ; he couldn't do much for me just now, but in a short time it might be in his power to do us a good turn."

By this time Maurice had been duly elected a member of the Tunnleton Club, and at once made the mistake common to most young men, he presumed to have opinions of his own. Prudent young men do not indulge in such luxuries, and perhaps get on better in consequence ; but the mere fact of his marriage has already shown that Maurice was neither prudent nor calculating. There were a good many retired warriors at the Tunnleton Club, veterans by compulsion, playing the rôle of Cincinnatus, embryo leaders of men, whom the present military system had precluded from blossoming into Hannibals and Napoleons ; but it was not to be supposed that for one moment caused them to doubt their capabilities upon campaigns in any part of the world ; and these perforce idle warriors laid down the law with much vehemence, not to say violence.

Now, if there is one thing that the public are, as a rule, ignorant of, it is geography ; we don't usually know much about our own country, but when it comes to foreign climes a man's knowledge is generally limited to such particular places as he has visited. Maurice Enderby had committed the unpardonable mistake of presuming to correct a trifling geographical error of some few thousand miles that two or three of these great authorities had fallen into over one of the numerous out-of-the-way wars that France and ourselves have always on our hands ; as for General Maddox he could scarcely believe his ears ! to be contradicted upon any military point by a civilian was in his eyes a gross impertinence, but, when that civilian was a parson to boot, it seemed almost incredible. From that out General Maddox and his great friend General Praun came to the conclusion that the Reverend Maurice Enderby was a conceited young prig.

"Wants taking down a peg or two, Praun ; and I'll tell you what," continued General Maddox, speaking in his usual slow, deliberate tones, "I shall do it. I'm not going to be put to rights by a whipper-snapper curate."

"Most disrespectful a young man like that venturing to differ from his seniors !" and, mumbling something about its being subversive of all order, discipline, and the ties of society, General Praun growled himself out of the club.

Much given to taking the chair at all sorts of meetings was General Praun. He dearly loved being in the chair, and no man more delighted in the sound of his own voice ; that was the real secret of his being so continually named as chairman of such meetings, it afforded him the opportunity of firing off a speech or

two. He never had much to say, nor did he say it particularly well ; but nothing would ever convince a man with a *penchant* for speech-making that he was not an orator, so that almost from the very beginning Maurice Enderby had contrived to offend two men who were prominent actors in the social life of Tunnleton, however small their position might be in the world generally. A small thing this, but it had a curious effect upon the fortunes of Maurice Enderby, as the sequel will show.

Two very prominent sections of society at Tunnleton were the clergy and that military hierarchy of which I have already spoken. They may not like each other, in short they very often do not, but still there is a *camaraderie* about the service which makes them hang together even after their swords have been hung upon the walls, and their uniforms become the property of the Hebrew.

Maurice, unluckily for himself, not only continued to frequent the club, but happened to be a Liberal in politics. He more than once took up the cudgels in behalf of that party, and, as he possessed a clear logical mind, more than once left the veterans, whose arguments consisted of mere blatant asseveration, in a quagmire of confusion, reducing them indeed to wrathful silence, which relieved itself only by snorts of indignation. These men regarded society pretty much as a garrison, and deemed they were entitled to treat it as despotically as they had been wont to rule their regiments ; old Indians especially are apt to forget they are no longer monarchs of the social jungle, and cannot resist roaring as they were wont to roar, albeit their voice has lost authority.

It is bitter in the mouth when the man who has been a satrap at Bangalore or Poonah discovers he is a nobody in London ; and it is even worse for his feminine belongings. I was once made piteous plaint to by a woman on this very subject. Her husband had been Governor in one of our numerous dependencies, but the rule came to an end and his glories departed.

"It is a cruel change," she said : "last year I drove my own carriage, and was the leading lady in the island ; now I go about in hack cabs, and am nobody."

A tall, good-looking young curate, with radical tendencies, and the audacity to express his opinions, was such an anomaly in Tunnleton that the community stood aghast, but there was no denying that Maurice Enderby buckled down steadily and conscientiously to his work in the pulpit ; even those most prejudiced against him were fain to confess he was quite the equal of Lomax, and that his discourses had far more stuff in them ; one point, it was true, the feminine part of his congregation still deemed to his detriment—he was married.

Maurice Enderby was going through a new experience. He was discovering that in the *mêlée* of life he had exposed himself to his enemies when he took unto himself a wife. But a clever or vindictive man has but to bide his opportunity over such attacks,

and remember that it is a simple matter of time to nail his adversaries to the barn-door in their turn as keepers crucify the vermin they destroy. Neither man nor woman ever had a record in which retribution was not practicable, and, though Maurice's profession to a great extent tied his hands, it might not do those of his friends. Bob Grafton, for instance, was likely to be very unscrupulous and energetic in reprisal, and with little reverence for generals, senators, or any one else, however distinguished, with the exception of a successful owner of race-horses; no man more likely to make things unpleasant for the notabilities of Tunnleton all round than Grafton: a shrewd man of the world, with a certain command of money and men.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TORKESLYS.

It was about a fortnight after he had met Bob Grafton that Maurice Enderby sat moodily smoking in his little dining-room. The morning had brought a threatening letter from Badger, who menaced all the pains and penalties if not immediately mollified by something on account. Badger's threats, if pushed to extremity, Maurice knew might utterly ruin him in his profession. The young man was grit to the backbone—a shrewd clever fellow, with plenty of capacity for work in him. If he smoked somewhat moodily to-night, it must not be thought that it was the tobacco of despair with which, conjoined with copious draughts of alcohol and water, men stifle unpleasant circumstances. Far from it. He had a very uneasy corner in his life to turn, and he was thinking all he knew how best to compass it. There was no more money to be made as yet in his profession, let him work as hard as he would at it. Do not misunderstand me and think that Maurice Enderby was anything but a thorough conscientious, hard-working man in his calling, but a clergyman may wish that the loaves and fishes could be multiplied by extra work when he has others depending on him, even when conscientiously discharging the duties of his trust. It is a profession, especially in its early stages, at which it is difficult to supplement the work with advantage to oneself. The only groove that occurred to Maurice was literature. Men of his cloth, he knew, had made much money by their pens, not perhaps in the first instance, but who at the bottom of the ladder does? yet in time their income from literature has far exceeded that from their Church preferment.

Yes, he would have a shy at that; there was no reason he should not spoil paper for two or three hours an evening. If nothing came of it, it was preferable to gloomy reflection, and at present he saw nothing better to turn his hand to, and it was

part of his creed both as a Christian and a man to take such work as came to him. His rector, too, Mr. Jarrow, could probably be of some use to him in this respect; but in this Maurice showed much worldly innocence. The Reverend Jarrow was a distinguished *littérateur* only in his own estimation and that of a limited circle of Tunnleton friends, but the man's overweening vanity would never permit him to admit that he was not an acknowledged literary star in the metropolis itself, and Maurice, though quite conscious the rector was possessor of no great talent in that respect, thought it quite probable that from his clerical position he commanded some influence amongst the more serious magazines. Not the man to undeceive him on that point is the Reverend Jarrow, but likely to foster false hopes and be profuse in his profession of assistance; likely again to be severely critical and disparaging when such manuscript as was intrusted to him was rejected, or fulsomely patronizing should it achieve a success; but all this is mercifully hidden from Maurice's vision as yet, as from that of many another aspirant to literary laurels whose toilsome past would never be trod were he conscious of how stony the commencement of that way was.

Things, too, were not altogether pleasant for the curate and his wife in Tunnleton. One of the most redoubtable families in the place were the Torkeslys. It was not by birth or position they had made themselves prominent in the place, but by their number and volubility. It was always said that Colonel Torkesly really did not, within one or two, know how many daughters he had. They pervaded Tunnleton; it was impossible to go out in Tunnleton without meeting a Torkesly, and to meet a Torkesly meant to hear gossip of some kind. Rumours existed that the family had talked themselves out of more than one such city of refuge. The new curate was safe game to fly at, for the Torkeslys could put the curb on their tongues when they deemed the quarry too strong on the wing; but Maurice Enderby and his wife had responded coldly to the enthusiastic gush of that family when they had called; and the Torkeslys, whose life was spent in a struggle to assert their dignity, invariably resented their overtures not being met with equal warmth. People usually do, and yet it would be a weary world if we were forced to take to our bosoms every one with whom we chanced to make acquaintance: better to stand the whole gamut of proud, stand-off, haughty, no-manners, than sell ourselves body and soul to the vulgarians.

Yet the Philistines rule the social world, for the most part grovelling before Dagon and the flesh-pots, but consoling themselves by spitting at those not privileged to set foot within the outer gate of Dagon's temple.

Now, nobody knew anything about the Enderbys, who they were or where they came from—much exercised on the point of

who Mrs. Enderby was; it is always the lady about whose antecedents the community are most disturbed, and, even if they had discovered that Mrs. Enderby was the niece of John Madingley, that fact would have conveyed no information to their minds. In London or the shires or in the county of the Ridings John Madingley's name was well known. Amongst the lovers of horse and hound, his name had been a household word in the days of his youth, and amidst the votaries of the turf the marvellous successes achieved by his small stud were often talked of. Madingley was no better; he ran his horses—horses, bear it in mind, invariably of his own breeding—from sheer love of sport, and, though as a younger man he undoubtedly backed them for a modest stake, during these latter years he had never either done that or even witnessed their performances. He was a good specimen of a type now pretty well extinct. With the famous Devonshire "passon" who but so lately left us, the last of this famous gathering of black-coated sportsmen may be considered to have finally closed. They were men of another age—good parish priests in their way, usually with comfortable private incomes of their own, which enabled them to help their poorer parishioners substantially, and their admonitions and advice generally were practised. The new generation would shudder at these proceedings, and profess they could entertain no respect for clergymen who lived such lives. Perhaps not, but the round of civilisation is a conundrum. Fifty years ago our ancestors, aye, the nobility and dandies of the London world, dined at what were designated as "sporting-cribs," attended prize fights, and were addicted to cock-fighting. They drank more wine than was good for them, and we of the present day doubtless think they were coarse in their manners; on the contrary, I believe that they were much more polished in manner than ourselves; they certainly were more particular in their manner with regard to ladies and also in dress. There was a time when to smoke in the Row would have been deemed the acme of bad taste; in the free-and-easy days we live in to leave a cloud of smoke behind you in a fashionable promenade is a bagatelle, to enter a drawing-room reeking of tobacco an every-day occurrence. All fashion, you say: men reeked of port wine in the early part of the century as they reek of tobacco in the present time.

Maurice Enderby himself had literally no other knowledge of the Reverend John Madingley than he had gathered from Bob Grafton. Bessie knew no more of her uncle than that he was a great sportsman, a wealthy man, and childless; and after he had made up his mind to try his hand at literature Maurice fell to musing—when he had obtained his title to orders and had been ordained priest whether John Madingley could not be induced to assist him to some small piece of preferment. He did not like Tunnleton, nor apparently did Tunnleton like him; but that did

not so much matter; he was young, strong, and at all events could see an end of life in Tunnleton. Two years he was bound to complete here, that was requisite as a passport to ordination, and, like it or dislike it, Bessie and he had—as he muttered—to worry through that in some way.

Then he thought of the old halcyon days when he had first met Bessie, and wandered with her through the shady glades of the Clipperton Woods, and finally told her his love story; the undisguised indignation of Mrs. Marigold when she discovered that Maurice proposed to marry her governess instead of her second daughter. Dear Mrs. Marigold had her quiver full of these blessings, and like a wise matron, knowing that her daughters were but slenderly dowered, deemed it quite admissible to shift the responsibility of taking charge of them on to any eligible young man who might frequent her sunny villa on the banks of the Thames. She had deemed Maurice Enderby a much greater catch than he really was, thought she saw a penchant on his part for Laura, her second, and had considered the whole thing would do very well; and when that young gentleman in his usual *insouciant* manner informed her of his engagement to Bessie Madingley, as the good lady expressed it afterwards, “you might have knocked her down with a feather,”—one of those oft-quoted illustrations for which there is no historical warrant.

But, if she might have been knocked down with a feather, she recovered herself with marvellous alacrity, and lost no time in giving Miss Madingley her *congé*, both her adieux and congratulations bearing an unmistakable tinge of acidity. But Bessie was happy, and all smiles and laughter, in spite of the ill-concealed bitterness with which her employer bade her farewell.

It mattered little after all—so thought Maurice at the time; but the world is small, the venom of an angry woman's tongue goes far, and is hard at times to contradict. Mrs. Marigold was neither sparing nor particularly scrupulous concerning the truth with regard to her late governess. Bessie, indeed, had always been a somewhat independent young woman. She had a slender income of her own, very slender it was true, but enough to make the fact of her losing a situation no matter of immediate dismay—and then Maurice told her she was to go out in the world no more, but become his wife as soon as they could get matters arranged. Yes, it had all been very sweet, those days of courtship and honeymoon, but he was face to face with the consequences of matrimony now; a small Enderby would be shortly added to the family circle, which meant a considerably additional expenditure. Maurice sent heavy clouds of smoke from his *brûle-gueule*, as he thought over this, and the very slender balance there was lying at his banker's. Yes, there was no doubt he must at once hit on some plan to supplement his income.

So far the Rev. Jacob Jarroo was very well satisfied with his

new curate: if Maurice was a little argumentative and self-assertive at the club, he had the good sense to hold his tongue before his rector. He had some idea of discipline, and conceived that he was bound, at all events at present, to conform to the views of his superior in his profession, but when he found himself upon neutral ground, and upon subjects not ecclesiastical, he looked upon it that he had as much right to his opinion as any one else. Fatal mistake! as if any one can afford opinions of his own at the outset of his career. When your foot is fairly on the ladder it is time enough to air your opinions.

Maurice, poor fellow, had not as yet quite grasped that fact in social ethics, a want of knowledge of which is productive of a harvest of thistles, as a rule, to the luckless wight ignorant of the fact.

CHAPTER XII.

FINANCIAL TROUBLES.

THE storm-clouds are gathering fast round Maurice Enderby's head. Badger of Cambridge is showering threatening missives and threats of denunciation to every one, from the University Dons to the bench of Bishops, if that account of his be not speedily settled. The butchers' and bakers' bills are slowly but surely creeping into arrears, and money somehow seems to be waxing scarcer and scarcer. Once get a little behindhand with the world, and the first discovery one makes is that there are only eighteen shillings in a sovereign. Bessie, too, is unable to get about to see after things herself as well as usual; Maurice has no idea of grappling with the tradespeople, and therefore the probability is that his housekeeping is managed on a somewhat thriftless scale. His literary schemes, so far, have been profitless; he has written more than one thoughtful article which he had submitted to his rector, which he had honestly deemed to have good stuff in it, although carefully bearing in mind the pride an author is apt to take in his own bantlings. The Reverend Jacob, with all the proud pre-eminence of the man who has figured in print, has pronounced them in a patronising manner "by no means bad, sir; very creditable to a young man fleshing his maiden pen:" has taken charge of them, and has promised to submit them to the editors of some of the heavy artillery reviews, with whom the rector gives Maurice vaguely to understand that he is upon more or less intimate terms; in reality, Maurice would have had every bit as good a chance had he quietly dropped it into the post-office on his own account, Mr. Jarrold's name being no more known to the Jupiters who swayed the destinies of these periodicals than Maurice's himself. Editors may—or may not—read the effusions of unknown contributors; it is too often a search for the grain of

corn in the bushel of chaff, and must consequently depend upon their time, patience, or lack of material; but most educated people think they could write a magazine article if they tried.

Tunnleton, too, generally was planting its darts in Maurice Enderby. Pin-pricks, if you like; it is not the banderillos that *kill* the bull, but they goad him to madness; and so it was with poor Maurice; accustomed to hold his head amongst the best men of his college, and with an acknowledgedly good head-piece, Maurice was fearless, frank, and outspoken in his opinions; he rather pooh-poohed and laughed at Tunnleton's old-world notions, and Tunnleton fiercely resented that one whom they designated "a mere unknown, penniless curate" should take this tone with them. He was stuck-up, said Tunnleton, and must be made to recognize his proper position. He ought to be very grateful for being taken any notice of; but Maurice Enderby utterly declined to be patronized; he accepted such attentions as were bestowed upon him as if perfectly his due, treated the *élite* of Tunnleton with courtesy, but completely as though he was their equal, and made not the slightest bones in differing from General Maddox, General Praun, or any of the other pillars of the community, upon any subject whatever; a shrewd, clever young fellow, thoroughly well read, and perfectly conversant with most of the leading topics of the day, he was a terrible thorn in the side of most of the veterans of the club. The military experiences of General Maddox and Praun, for instance, were somewhat antiquated; Maurice had been a member of the University Volunteer Corps, and consequently his knowledge of the present system of drill far exceeded that of those gallant old officers.

In these days the interest in things military wonderfully exceeds that of thirty years ago. Before the Crimean war it may be doubted whether much more was known concerning soldiers than that they all wore red, had rather good bands, gave rather good dinners, and, the young ladies would add, were as a rule good waltzers. But the campaign of the Chersonese changed all that. For the first time the vivid pens of Special Correspondents brought the daily doings of the soldiers under the eyes of their countrymen. Maps of the famous Black Sea peninsula were published by the thousands, and the redoubts of the Malakoff and Mamelon, the whereabouts of Eupatoria and Batchi Serai, were as accurately known to hundreds of civilians as to the veteran warriors whose swords were hanging on the walls; indeed, judging by the joke of "take care of Dowb," probably better than by those on the spot. Then came the great Volunteer movement. A knowledge of military science spread rapidly. No men are more conservative as a rule than soldiers, and the heroes of the Sikh campaign, who won their spurs long before the appearance of arms of precision, would doubtless deride any opinion on military matters expressed by a civilian.

Do you suppose a Crimea man, accustomed to see or hear of a far bigger record of killed and wounded weekly in a nameless skirmish, feels much respect for the battle of Tel-el-Kebir? It was ever so with these warriors of the olden times. They didn't see much in results that were brought about with such marvelously little fighting. I suppose it's all right, and that our very modern generals are marvellous chess-players, but when one sees such very small sacrifice of the pawns and knights one can but think there is a very weak player at the other side of the board. Now this was just one of the things that Maurice Enderby irritated these old soldiers about to an enormous extent; not only was he Liberal in his politics, but he stood up stoutly for the triumphs of the great Liberal generals, that is, those appointed by the Liberal administration, and against which in good sooth his adversaries might have had much to say had they only the wit to argue the question, but that was just what they could not do; the clever young Oxonian knew much more about modern military strategy than they did, and, to speak figuratively, tripped up their heels and laid them on their backs continually.

It can hardly be supposed that all this conduced to making Maurice Enderby popular with the little military hierarchy that somewhat dominated Tunnleton. That the veterans of the Old Guard should be wroth with a curate who dared to challenge their military memories and opinions was but natural. Maurice Enderby was adding little to his popularity by his display of soldier's lore at the Tunnleton Club.

Things certainly were looking black for the new curate. To people like the butcher and baker he was somewhat in arrear, and these people were beginning to be respectfully urgent with regard to their money, when there suddenly occurred an event that took Tunnleton's breath away! General Praun's eyes nearly bolted out of his head, and, in that temperate and classic language for which he was distinguished, he exclaimed to his wife on going home to lunch, "By——! what do you think, Jem" (short for Jemima); "what *do* you think? I'm dashed if the Bridge Court carriage wasn't standing at the Enderbys' door as I passed it just now."

Likely to make a terrible stir this, in a tiny little fish-pond like Tunnleton. The Bridge Court people did not fraternize with Tunnleton, and indeed were not upon visiting terms with any one but the Chyltons of the Bank and Dr. Rumney, and even with these the acquaintance was slight, and limited to a couple of formal dinners a year. The Balders were most decidedly not given to general calling in Tunnleton. They had never vouchsafed the slightest notice of General Maddox, General Praun, or any of those other military magnates as leaders of Tunnleton society. General Maddox—who mastered the fact about the same time—indeed, circumstances in Tunnleton were not very long in

becoming town-talk—took the news home to his wife with the observation:

"Most extraordinary, my dear. By Jupiter! if the Balders haven't called on that stuck-up young Enderby! Where the deuce society's going to I don't know, but, when county people call upon radical curates and overlook general officers, there must be a pretty considerable screw loose in our social organization somewhere."

"Do you mean to tell me, Maxey, that the Bridge Court people have actually called upon the Enderbys?"

"Yes, by Jove, I do! and nothing has astonished me so much for a long time; if serving your country for close on forty years don't entitle a man to his country's respect, I don't know what does; and yet, here are the Bridge Court people calling on a whipper-snapper curate like Enderby, and, as you know, madam, they have never, as yet, called upon us."

It was not likely that such an event as this would escape that keen-sighted cohort, the Torkeslys—difficult indeed to baffle the vision or ears of that vigilant little brigade of sharp-shooters. Nothing much that went on in Tunnleton could escape their ken—it was difficult to imagine even a proposal of marriage taking place without a Torkesly looming in the background. You couldn't get away from that indefatigable family; some one or other member of them attended everything; and ball, birth, or burial, feast or fast, wooing or wedding, there was ever a Miss Torkesly there to take keen and attentive note of the proceedings. No uncommon type this, you will always find a family or so of this kind in every provincial town, taking that diligent interest in their neighbours' affairs that is so delightful, and tends so much to universal love and good feeling.

Tunnleton, indeed, was much exercised in its mind about the fact of the Bridge Court people having called upon the Enderbys, and once more the question as to who the Enderbys were was fiercely discussed. To Maurice it was all plain enough. He knew very well that he was indebted for this courtesy from the Balders to Bob Grafton as an intimate friend of the family; he had doubtless mentioned his—Maurice's—name, and begged they would do the civil thing to them, and cheery unaffected people like the Bridge Court family were only too pleased to extend the hand of fellowship to a couple whom they were emphatically told would prove a pleasant acquisition to their circle.

"You will do them, me, and yourselves a turn, Miss Balders, if you call on them," Bob Grafton said upon the occasion of his last visit to Bridge Court. "He was not only in quite one of the best sets at Oxford, but about the best man all round in it. He not only could beat us in the schools, but we couldn't catch him with the drag either, and as for his wife she is simply charming. They labour under only one drawback, and that is one that you

are not the people to care about; they are poor. As for Mrs. Enderby, she is a niece of old John Madingley, one of the best families in Yorkshire."

"I shall not forget, Mr. Grafton; we would do a great deal more than that for an old friend like yourself, and if a little civility from Bridge Court can make things a trifle more pleasant for Mr. and Mrs. Enderby during their sojourn in Tunnleton, don't be afraid but what it shall be extended to them."

And the Maddoxes, the Prauns, and the Torkeslys marvelled greatly at this new and extraordinary phenomenon in the social horizon, destined to be still more astonished before the erratic course of such a comet as Maurice Enderby was brought to a conclusion.

CHAPTER XIII.

LITERARY FAILURES.

THAT the Bridge Court people should call upon "those Enderbys" perfectly convulsed the minds of Mrs. Maddox, Praun, and those uncountable Torkeslys, but far from propitiated that great faction of Tunnleton already disposed to speak ill-naturedly of the new curate; it simply set their tongues running faster; apparently it seemed a piece of presumption in their eyes that Maurice Enderby should even be called upon at all. They could give no reason for this. Enderby was a gentleman who had received a university education, and came there unmistakably to take a gentleman's position in their midst. As for his wife, no one for one moment disputed the fact that she was a lady; it was not that, but the magnates of Tunnleton thought curates were to be patronized, and, lo and behold, here was a curate who not only refused to be patronized but held strong opinions of his own, and, worse still, had the audacity to express them!

"Gad, sir!" said General Praun, "that young beggar Enderby at the club only the other day not only found fault with the government but pronounced the chiefs of the opposition a set of old women; besides, it's all very well, sir, but you must reverence something or somebody, and, as far as I can see, he has no reverence for anything or anybody; why, dash it, sir, he simply pooh-poohed Maddox's views and mine about the Eastern question, and I flatter myself that, after the years we spent there, we should be some authority upon what is likely to occur there."

A fatal mistake! As if there were not men who could live ten years in a country and not know more about it than the student who only gets his knowledge from books; as if time stood still, and the man who has spent half a lifetime in a country but left it fifteen years ago can be the slightest judge of public thought or public feeling there in the present day! It has happened

probably to most of us to go back to some place that we have known when young, and perhaps a score of years ago. Do not we all know what a miserable mistake it has been? We have seen more of the world since then, and the place looks dwarfed. It is so much smaller than we pictured it. The promenade we once thought so magnificent turns out to be a very small affair; the public rooms and public buildings insignificant; and what we have been trained to look on as the magnificent mansions of the place turn out to be very ordinary residences after all. Now, much as Generals Maddox and Praun would have derided the idea, Maurice Enderby had really seen more of the world than either of these gallant officers. Their lives had been principally passed in India; when they did retire from the service they had settled in Tunnleton, and, though no doubt they occasionally visited the metropolis, their knowledge of London was very circumscribed. Tunnleton was the home of their adoption, and Tunnleton, after the manner of the citizens of Boston, U.S., they had elevated to the position of "Hub of the Universe."

In the meantime Maurice felt his life growing harder and harder; he lived in apprehension of what the irritable Badger might be capable of. This alone showed that he was no hardened offender; had he been more practised in debt and difficulties he would have known quite well, that, whatever he might threaten, Mr. Badger would never proceed to extremities. Mr. Badger was no fool, and knew perfectly well that the settlement of his account depended entirely upon Mr. Enderby's doing well in his profession.

"It is as well to keep the screw on 'em," Mr. Badger observed, when talking the matter over with one of his intimates; "it may be hard, but it's best to wring a bit out of them on account, even though you know there's no chance of a real settlement—keeps 'em lively like, makes 'em think of you—makes 'em bear you in mind because they know you bears them; it ain't to be supposed they likes it, but, Lord love you, nobody does like paying for the cakes and ale he ate two years ago."

Mr. Badger's business was peculiar; if he hadn't given a great deal of credit it would have been very much restricted, but he understood it, and he understood human nature. He might be a man of no education, but he was a thorough philosopher, and if he bullied Maurice Enderby it was neither in a spiteful spirit nor from any personal feeling of animosity, it was in fact a mere matter of business. Maurice's, like many other such debts, was so much capital locked up. There was plenty of time to wait for a complete settling, but it was necessary to wring a certain sum per annum out of the luckless creditor to represent the thirty or forty per cent. that Mr. Badger considered his due on such transactions. But to the man relentlessly worried for money it signifies little whether it is a matter of business or a matter of malice. The finding of the precious metals is equally difficult,

and the majority of humanity, recklessly though they may incur debt, pay when they can when dunned in earnest. It was a bold Hibernian plunger who, hardly pressed and even threatened with the penalties of an utterly unsettled Epsom account, I heard some years ago exclaim, philosophically, to his angry creditors, "Faith, you cannot get blood out of a stone." What became of that staunch backer of persistent losers I never heard, but my mind misgives me that his creditors very quickly realised the truth of his remark.

Maurice kept his troubles pretty well to himself. He was not of the kind that takes to begging and whimpering in their difficulties; like a game horse he "ran honest" in his distress, and did his best to struggle home. It was no use vexing Bessie, especially now, with the stories of his debts and duns, but for all that the story was one that promised to speedily publish itself. Live he must—at all events he saw the necessity, if nobody else did—and the butcher and the baker were necessary adjuncts to existence. Very prosaic this, no doubt; more prosaic still the quiet pertinacity with which those purveyors send in their weekly accounts.

Maurice Enderby thought anxiously over all these things as he smoked his solitary pipe. They came between him and the paper—for he was still working steadily at literature, in the hope that the time would shortly come when he might supplement his income in that wise. But literature is a slippery ladder to climb, and, in its earlier stages, one's work is by no means in much request. Maurice, too, was making a very bad start. Better to run on your own bottom than under the fostering wing of an impostor, who conveys to you an exaggerated idea of his power in the land of letters.

Maurice's stuff was, in the language of the profession, "by no means bad," but when it reached the hands of the editors recommended by the Reverend Jacob Jarrow they did not much trouble themselves to look at it. That gentleman was but little known, and his lucubrations were regarded much in the same light as the famous "Eatansville Gazette," which the irreverent Slurk pronounced "ungrammatical twaddle." Little hope that solid remuneration would accrue for some time yet to Maurice from that quarter. Another singular thing that went against Maurice was his play at lawn tennis. There are some amusements at which you may become unpopular by being a little too good. Maurice had been one of the best players at the University, and it was objected to him at garden-parties, when he joined at this diversion, that he "spoiled the interest of the game," as he played rather too well. It is easily understood; average players get a vast amount of amusement out of all games they may patronize, but the appearance of a past master invariably spoils their fun. People said unkind things concerning him. General Praun

remarked that he must have dedicated his whole time at college to the acquirement of lawn tennis, which accounted for his ignorance on other subjects.

The attentions too of the Bridge Court people were gall and wormwood to Tunnleton. The Balders had undoubtedly been very civil to Maurice and his wife. They had not only called several times, but had asked them to lunch and spend the day at Bridge Court; and, upon finding that Bessie was in delicate health, had sent her various contributions from the conservatories and fruit-houses. All this occasioned much spiteful feeling in Tunnleton, where there were several families who rather looked down upon the Enderbys, and considered themselves far more worthy of such distinction. It is so at times. People constantly resent our knowing their superiors in the social scale. We may not be very proud of it; we may not brag of it; but by some accident we have achieved such acquaintance, and the mere fact that it is so always irritates such persons when it comes under their notice.

Clouds roll up as well as roll by, and Maurice's horizon was getting more and more gloomy as the spring-time came. He was a happy father, and that event had not contributed to lighten his difficulties, although he pretty well held his own with his tradespeople, and the irritable Badger still confined himself to threats. One morning he received an unexpected letter from Bob Grafton, which ran as follows:—

“DEAR MAURICE,

“How are Mrs. Enderby and the young one going on?—I hope well. I saw the birth of the son and heir in the *Times*” (“Heir,” muttered Maurice. “Yes, to the inheritance of love”) “and had a bottle of champagne on the strength of it. Put me down as godfather if you can’t do better. Mind, a good godfather is like a good though rather far-fetched speculation; he may turn up trumps some day, ‘more or less,’ as the music-hall bard hath it. I might do as a second string, being good for a silver cup down, and a case of wine for keeping his early birthdays with.

“Now there’s another of your family on the verge, I’m told, of distinguishing herself. The Wandering Nun, I hear, is to make her *début* in the ‘Woodcotes,’ and report speaks highly of the young lady’s charms and capabilities. I intend to have a pony on her myself, but, unless my memory—a pretty good one—plays me false, her triumph will mean something better than that to Mrs. Enderby. Don’t be very sanguine about it. Young ones the first time of asking are seldom to be trusted on a racecourse, and the equine fair sex in the first part of the season are wont to be capricious in their behaviour. Have you seen much of the Bridge Court people? They are great friends of mine, as you know, and I hope you have seen a good deal of them. I’m afraid I shall not

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be down your way till the autumn, so with kind regards to the wife, and trusting that the 'wandering recluse' may distinguish herself at Epsom,

"I am ever yours,

"BOB GRAFTON."

Maurice received this letter in the early part of April, and that from this he should occasionally glance at the racing intelligence in the morning papers was only natural; but, of course, he found no allusion to the "Woodcotes," and easily ascertained that that race was not run until the end of May, and there was seldom any betting upon it till two or three days before the race. From that time he put it out of his thoughts, and it was not till the papers teemed with the accounts of the great Epsom carnival that he once more sought for information about Uncle John's wedding present. He read the account of the "Woodcotes" with great interest—interest which rapidly died out on his ascertaining that the "Wandering Nun" had not even started for that race.

"Ah!" he said to himself, "I'm afraid Bessie's wedding-gift is one of those will-o'-the-wisps that terminate in nothing. I don't know much about it, but every one has heard that very promising foals, like very promising boys, often turn out much below mediocrity. There is no more dependence to be placed on help from that quarter. Grafton was quite right when he warned me not to be too sanguine. My literature is coming to nothing—we can't live more carefully than we do, and yet we are drifting behind the world, to say nothing of my old Oxford liabilities looming in the background;" and with this reflection Maurice Enderby threw down the paper and went for a long meditative walk.

"I must try and turn my hand to something else," he mused, "I work hard at my profession, but I want something to supplement it; however, as I don't see my way to anything else at present, I'll just hammer along at the pen-and-ink work, and next time I'll not ask Jarrow's help, but run up to town and see what I can do on my own account."

CHAPTER XIV.

RICHARD MADINGLEY.

BUT if the world was by no means a bed of roses to Maurice Enderby it was still less so to his wife. Bessie was a plucky little woman, out and about, and quite herself again now. Still she was fighting a hard battle in many ways; there was not only the endless struggle to make both ends meet on scanty means, but she had her own countless skirmishes with Tunnleton society to boot.

Bessie was a quick-witted young woman, and with plenty of spirit of her own. And when Tunnleton commenced patronizing her it quickly found that she was by no means disposed to accept the rôle of the meek curate's wife. She had more than once completely worsted the Torkeslys in their own house, and even Mrs. Maddox had been compelled to own that Mrs. Enderby quite knew how to take her place in this world. She was almost as bad as her husband. She smiled good-naturedly at Tunnleton fashions, and sometimes rather laughed at Tunnleton opinions, and it was a quickly recognized thing that Bessie could take her own part in the social tournament. Neither she nor her husband at all kotooed to the magnates of the place, but then on the other hand it was conceded that they were agreeable, pleasant people, although they had the audacity to have opinions of their own—a thing preposterous in their present position. Still as the summer wore on, although it was rumoured that the Enderbys were dreadfully hard up, yet perhaps they had grown somewhat more popular. People do sometimes who pursue the even tenor of their way and don't trouble themselves about their neighbours. It was about this time that an event occurred in Tunnleton which was destined later on to agitate the little town to its very centre. A young gentleman of about five-and-twenty arrived in the place with two or three horses and as many servants, took one of the most suitable bachelor residences in the town, announced that his name was Richard Madingley, and that he meant to spend the summer there. He had taken a house with a pretty garden attached to it, just the thing, he remarked, for garden-parties—put himself up for the Club, and let it be understood that he meant to entertain and go in for society generally.

Tunnleton voted Mr. Madingley an immense acquisition; the young ladies declared he was so handsome; the men were struck with his off-hand bonhomie; and then there was no deception about his hospitable intentions. As soon as he had felt his way he gave a correct little bachelor-dinner, and picked his guests with marvellous dexterity. He had not fallen into the mistake of asking a lot of young men of his own age, but bidden to the feast "the grave and reverend signors," and had taken care that the palates of the veterans should be titillated. General Maddox pronounced him a fine young fellow, while General Praun declared that the evening brought back vivid recollections of the Byculla Club. There was only one member of the military hierarchy who was not loud in his encomiums of young Madingley, and this was General Shrewster. Shrewster was a man of the world, an ex-dragon, a man who had lived all his life in the best society. He had been asked to the feast of young Lucullus, but had declined, and when pressed upon the subject of this self-denial had replied, tersely:

"I think you are all a little mistaken in that young man. I have nothing, remember, to allege against him. No doubt he is a

popular young fellow, but he gives me the idea of not being quite a gentleman. I dare say I am mistaken, but at all events I generally stand to my own opinion, and have no intention of being on terms of intimacy with him."

General Shrewster was a slightly cynical man, unmarried, but well off, and his opinion carried considerable weight in Tunnleton. He did not mix much in society, living rather a quiet and retired life, although entertaining occasionally in admirable taste.

"By Jove, sir!" General Maddox would say, "Shrewster may not do it often, but he does know how to do it." But the ex-dragoon was a difficult man to lure to other people's houses. Always courteous, low-voiced, and pleasant, when he did put in an appearance he was amazingly popular, and especially with the ladies. A good-looking, thorough-bred man of fifty-five, young ladies particularly voted him charming, and the rarity of his appearance, as usual, enhanced his value. Amongst one of his curious whims, at all events in the eyes of Tunnleton, was that he had taken a fancy to Maurice Enderby. He laughed at his liberal principles, and as an old *militaire* naturally pooh-pooed the idea of his knowing anything about military matters, but for all that he bore an unmistakably kindly feeling towards the curate.

When General Praun upon one occasion ventured to ask him what made him such friends with that bumptious young curate, between himself and whom there was not an opinion in common, General Shrewster replied, with a queer smile:

"I like 'em well-bred, and that fellow's got good blood in his veins; he is the sort of young man I should like to have seen amongst my subalterns when I commanded the 7th Hussars; I dare say he can ride, and if he can't I'd bet a cool hundred he'd very soon learn; and I'll tell you what, Praun, a young fellow who has the pluck to hold unpopular opinions is seldom wanting in pluck about anything. There was a deuced good dragoon lost to the service when Enderby turned curate."

Maurice, from the first, had naturally been struck by the name of Richard Madingley; he had watched his proceedings with considerable interest, and, strange to say, he had come much to the same opinion as General Shrewster; when he questioned Bessie about this distant relative of hers, she simply made answer, that she had never heard of him; "still," she added, "as far as I gather from you he is really only a second cousin of Uncle John's, and relations of that kind very often know nothing about each other."

"Still," rejoined Maurice, "I should have thought you would have heard who was the probable heir to your uncle's estates; when there is a rich man in the family it is generally pretty well known who will be, or at all events who is likely to be, his successor."

"I can only say," replied Bessie, "I haven't the slightest idea

who Uncle John's heir is likely to be: I know he has no very near relations."

"Why! What do you call yourself?" cried Maurice.

"Well, I believe I am the nearest he has, but you don't for one moment suppose that he would think of leaving Bingwell to a woman?"

"No, indeed, I didn't mean that," said Maurice, laughing. "I wouldn't give you much for your reversion of the property, so suppose this Mr. Madingley is in all probability his heir."

And with that the conversation on the subject dropped.

"Good morning, Mr. Enderby," exclaimed Maria Torkesly, meeting the curate in Tontine Street, the leading thoroughfare of Tunnleton. "Have you heard the news? Mr. Madingley is going to give a great garden-party on the 12th, and everybody is going. We have just got our card; are you going?"

"Well, Miss Torkesly, I have not got mine, so I suppose I may answer, no."

"Oh, I dare say they are not all out as yet. You are sure to receive one. You must come. Give my love to Mrs. Enderby and tell her I shall quite look forward to seeing her there."

Maurice raised his hat in sign of adieu, and Miss Torkesly hurried off to flourish her invitation before all her acquaintances. When she said that every one was going, she knew perfectly well that it was not to be a large party, but it was a customary fiction of the Torkeslys whereby they conveyed the fact to their unasked neighbours that everybody that was anybody was going, and left them to the obvious inference.

Maurice, his morning's work finished, dropped into the club to have a glance at the morning's papers before going home to luncheon. He found that little community in a state of considerable excitement, and the military section (a somewhat large one) literally on the boil. Our troops had sustained a tremendous disaster on the other side of the Equator, and, let alone Tunnleton, all England was ringing with it that morning.

"What business had he so far from his base?" asked General Maddox, in those judicial tones of his, "tell me that, sir."

"He ought to be shot," rejoined the irascible Praun. "If they don't bring Lord Raggleton to a court-martial the Government ought to be ashamed of themselves."

"Gad, he does seem to have made a mess of it," said General Shrewster, "upon my word he doesn't seem to understand the use of cavalry at all. He's responsible for the whole business, and when I was in the service a man who had made such a preposterous mistake as that would have thought himself lucky if his life had not been the penalty of it."

"I suppose the leader of an army is always liable to make a mistake at times," remarked Maurice, quietly; "don't you

recollect Napoleon's dictum. Lord Raggleton has apparently blundered this time."

"But there are blunders a man ought not to escape punishment for," said General Shrewster with an amused twinkle in his eye.

"Perhaps not, but don't you think we are trying Lord Raggleton by a drum-head court-martial with next to no knowledge of facts?" retorted Maurice; "the English public, like the Athenians, are swift, though not particularly just, in their judgment."

"You are hardly a judge of military affairs," snorted Praun, "a man like Raggleton ought to meet his deserts."

"Do you think a man fights best with a rope round his neck, general? I should think one would feel one's hands rather tied about fighting if one knew the penalty for defeat were to be death. One does not require to be a military man to understand that."

"You see, Mr. Enderby," observed General Maddox in his most pompous tones, "a civilian cannot be expected to quite understand these matters any more than we can be expected to understand the intricacies of your profession."

"Well," rejoined Maurice, laughing, "I have heard some of you comment pretty freely upon the proceedings of my cloth before this, and now I must go home to lunch. 'Tis possible, gentlemen, you may alter your verdict when fuller details concerning this disaster reach us. Meanwhile I think it would be as well for Lord Raggleton that his court-martial should *not* be held at Tunneleton."

"By Jove!" said General Praun, as Maurice left the room, "that fellow Enderby is the most conceited young upstart I ever came across: there is nothing he refrains from giving his opinion about. What can he know, now I ask you all, *what* the devil *can* he know about campaigning?"

"Well," replied General Shrewster, laughing, "I don't suppose he does know much about that, but he is a little difficult to get the better of in argument. Carries too many guns for you, Praun, eh?"

"I hate fellows who are all jabber like young rooks," replied that irascible veteran, and turning abruptly on his heel he left the room.

General Shrewster gave a low laugh. It amused him very much to see his ancient brethren in arms so utterly unable to cope in conversation with the young parson, but still he had quite as great a contempt for a civilian's opinion on military affairs as either General Maddox or General Praun.

When Maurice arrived at home he found Bessie waiting lunch for him with rather a troubled face.

"What's the matter, dear?" he asked. "I can see that something has gone wrong."

"Have your lunch first," she said; "nothing has gone wrong, still there is a little unpleasantness."

Maurice looked at her for a moment, and then as he sat down to his modest repast said, inquiringly,

"I suppose you want money."

"Well, yes, if you can find it," she said. "Rumford, the butcher, was up here this morning, and said he would like something on account; his bill has been running rather long, you know."

Maurice said nothing, but became plunged into deep thought. He must have a little money to go on with somehow; as to attempting a settlement with Badger that was out of the question, but the tradespeople were another matter; he must go to his wife's trustees, and persuade them to let him have a hundred pounds out of her settlement. They were not likely to object to this, more especially as this settlement was not good in the eye of the law, it having been made subsequent to the large debt he had contracted to the livery-stable keeper. He had vowed that nothing but Badger should ever make him break into that little fund. In this case if the man should proceed to extremities he was unable to prevent it, and to the extent of his due the livery-stable keeper could compel him to dip into it. He sat ruefully thinking over all this, when Bessie, suddenly putting her hand on his shoulder, exclaimed:

"Don't look so sad, Maurice, I quite forgot to tell you I have a letter for you. Here it is. I think it is from Mr. Grafton, and have a presentiment it contains good news."

"Bob's letters, like your uncle's wedding present, are a delusion and a snare," rejoined Maurice, smiling. "He said we were to make our small fortunes in May, and that remarkable quadruped, in which you are half-proprietor, seemed to disappear below the horizon immediately afterwards. However, let us see what he says."

"DEAR MAURICE," so the letter began,—*"You must doubtless have wondered what has become of the 'Wandering Nun.' At Epsom she never put in an appearance, and I suppose had succumbed to the mishaps incidental in training: but I met a fellow the other day who knows all about the stable, and he tells me the only reason they did not run her for the 'Woodcotes' was that they did not consider her quite up to the mark.*

"He tells me that she is all right now, going on wonderfully well, and they expect her to run away with the 'Chesterfields,' next month. As I told you before, she carries my pony whenever she does start, and I fully expect to have a good look at her at Newmarket, and I hope a good deal for your sake, to say nothing of a little of my own, to see her win. My kind regards to Mrs. Enderby, and tell her that I think she will get the first instalment of Uncle John's wedding present next month."

Maurice put this letter down on the table, and, throwing himself

down in his chair, wondered if it would be possible to carry on till this race should be decided. If anything really came of it the meddling with Bessie's settlement would be averted; if nothing, it was only doing *then* what he thought of doing *now*.

(To be continued.)

SOCIAL ECHOES.

NOW that the afternoon call may be said to be a *thing of the past*, owing to the prevalence of "At Home" days and the present system of card-leaving, it is a rather *difficult matter* to cultivate a friendship with a new acquaintance. When one was allowed twenty minutes all to one's self with a *hostess*, as in times of yore, there was a chance of striking out some topic congenial to both, and of making some headway towards a *closer acquaintance-ship*. But now that callers have to talk to each other in a crowded room, the *hostess* giving about three minutes to each individual, friendship is of slow growth, if even it ever grow at all. We say "Mrs. Blank seems to be a charming woman; I should like to know her better;" but it is difficult. The weeks run round, and we get no nearer—perhaps if we did the charm would disappear. There are many women who are quite delightful to know slightly. As a rule, the very pleasantest acquaintances are those who improve as one knows them better; who do not "put their best goods in the window," as it were. So, perhaps, disappointment may be avoided by the difficulty of improving our knowledge of each other.

A crowded drawing room on an "At Home" day presents a curious phase of modern society. It is now the fashion *not* to be select. The queerer the people one knows, the more crowded will be one's drawing room. If we cannot have lions to roar, we may get a few hyenas. If they indulge the company with a howl or two, or even with the terrible laugh of a branch of their family, so much the better; people go away delighted. "Did you hear what Mr. So-and-So said?" they ask each other. "How audacious the man is; really one almost feels frightened. We must be sure to go to Mrs. Blank's next 'day.'" Or "How Lady Chose did go on, to be sure! What an extraordinary woman she is! Lina will be so sorry to have missed hearing her." And the fame of Mrs. Blank's afternoons grows and grows, so that the square in which she lives is half blocked with carriages when she receives her friends.

To be really famous, a character for eccentricity is necessary if the otherwise necessary genius or talent be absent. To be able to lead a cotillion well serves a man better than to have won the Victoria Cross; and to have figured in the Divorce Court and emerged thoroughly well whitewashed is an excellent thing for a

woman who likes plenty of going about and enjoys dinner-parties. This kind of thing makes society very interesting, if not precisely elevating.

At a recent "afternoon" there was much to delight the gossip-lover. Almost every one there had been "talked of" in one sense or other. One had written a "risky" book; another had most innocently committed bigamy, and did not at the moment know with any degree of exactitude who was the lady whom he really was bound to love and cherish, owing to the suspected existence of a previous husband of one of his two wives. This was all very interesting indeed. Quite as much so was the fact that two deadly enemies had accidentally met on this occasion. The few words they exchanged when they unluckily encountered each other in a blocked doorway were of a forcible description, both belligerents being men. There must have been extraordinary vitality about these short speeches, for in the course of ten minutes they had increased from a dozen words into a dialogue that would "play" for quite ten minutes at the Court Theatre. A very vivid imagination on the part of the various *raconteurs* may possibly have accounted for some of this gourd-like growth.

Society has come to be a series of sensations. If the host or hostess fail to provide something of the kind for the delectation of guests, it is impossible to expect that the function, whether it be dinner, At Home, or luncheon, will go off with any degree of success.

Perhaps the sensation may lie in a new dish. Less talked of than any other kind, this seldom fails of its effect. There cannot be a more absolutely certain way to touch a man's enthusiasm, after he has reached the age of thirty, than by the route of good cookery. A woman needs to be a decade older before her deepest sensibilities awake in this direction, and they seldom become quite so acute as they are in the male being. But they may be very fairly developed; and if a host raise up a reputation for himself on the strength of possessing an unusually clever cook, his success in society is assured—brains are nowhere in the race.

It is an odd thing that while American ladies are received with effusion into English society, their male relatives appear to be by no means so warmly welcomed, even if they be rich as Dives. Theirs is the money; its results appear in the women, to whom the chief part of the spending of it is intrusted. The confidence in themselves that is built upon the solid foundation of the possession of a "pile," enables the American *millionnaire* to say and do things that the ordinary Englishwoman would never venture upon. Her very dress is courageous, not to say hazardous. Her phrases are unconventional, and being so, give an air of originality to all she says, aided by an accent that is quite perceptible. The American is now a recognized factor in English society. She not merely holds her own, but she hollows out a

goodly groove for herself. She is very often as original as she seems to be, and on the whole is a decided acquisition.

This Transatlantic flower was represented "not in single spies, but in"—bouquets at Mrs. Brown Potter's *début* at the Haymarket Theatre. It is a certainty that an American can get more diamonds crowded on to herself than any other woman living. And her "jools" are, as a rule, larger and brighter and ever so much cleaner than those of our English sisters. When she is in evening dress, they help her to "whip creation," a process which is by no means displeasing to creation, in some cases. Americans are generally ornamental—they would be even more so if they could forget that they are so, and could wear their gowns without so much self-conscious obtrusiveness of elbow, caressing of folds and patting of coiffures.

We ought all to look our best this season, for the new *chiffons* are of the most attractive kind. Our beloved black silk dresses are restored to us, after an absence of many a long year, and we receive them with unfeigned delight. "After all, there is *nothing* so useful all round as a well-made black silk," we say, unconsciously echoing our mothers, as they in their time echoed our grandmothers.

We are to have the Directoire style of hats and bonnets reproduced this season, and even the broad-brimmed Leghorn hat of the books of beauty of fifty years ago is to revisit the fashionable world. Sometimes, in turning over an old photograph book, one comes upon a "shady" hat and thinks how absolutely hideous it is. But the Leghorns of this year will be nothing if not picturesque. The brim is to be bent about and in and out, running upward in a curve and downward at the opposite side, while the trimming will be of the most elaborate description. The "new" brocaded ribbons are to play an important part in this decoration. They are an exact reproduction of those worn by our grandmothers when they were young; and pretty rosebuds in natural colours are brocaded on a ground of tender tint in such a manner that each loop of the ribbon displays one bud of the size of nature. The newest shade in green is called "verdigris," and is a lovely colour, especially in velvet. Great plumes of feathers are to be displayed upon the crowns of these hats, a very favourite arrangement being the French rendering of our Prince of Wales' plume. They liberally give it six feathers, each of the three being lined with another, which may or may not contrast with it in colour. A beautiful instance of this arrangement was lately seen in a triple plume of palest canary-coloured feathers, each lined with, and leaning over upon, a white one, the whole being held together by loops of ribbon velvet in the two colours, of which the Tuscan straw of the hat seemed to be a deeper shade, a note in the bass.

Neither bonnets nor hats make any pretence to simplicity this year. Dresses do. Instead of the endless folds of last year,

heaped upon and contradicting each other, as they often did, we have this year the very minimum of drapery. Not more than a dozen stitches make all the difference between a draped and a plain skirt. But there *is* a difference, and an immense one. Those dozen stitches need skill and taste, and they tax the tailors' art, as much as they vex the thought of the milliner. The Princesses of Wales are having cotton gowns of the very simplest make, prepared for the hoped-for warm weather. The material chosen for the eldest is a pink zephyr, for the second sister a blue, and for the third, one which is neither blue nor pink, and yet partakes of both, subdued by a shade of grey. The tweed gowns that Redfern is now making for them are equally simple in make. In one of these, the bodice and drapery are of light tan-coloured cloth, the latter opening over a skirt of brown cloth, trimmed with braid of the same tint, in which gold and copper are freely mingled. The collar and cuffs are trimmed with similar braid, and the whole effect is one of easeful simplicity. Another of their tweed dresses is in a mixture of brown and fawn, the whole of the bodice being in the latter tint. Their cotton gowns are, if possible, even more simply made, the bodices being tucked on either side the buttons, like a man's shirt, and held in at the waist with a belt.

Pretty Princess Victoria of Teck's latest tweed dress is in a check of biscuit-colour, with delicate lines of pale blue; the drapery is longer and more elaborate than that in her cousin's gowns, and the bodice opens over a white drill vest, with revers which turn back the whole way round the neck, but stop short half-way down the front in a peculiarly becoming way. A long mantle is being made for her in figured blue cloth, lined with checked silk. It will be seen from these few notes on Royal gowns that simplicity is to a certainty in favour in the highest circles. It was a matter of notoriety in a certain English seaside town not many seasons ago, that the young Princesses of Wales were much more simply dressed than the daughters of certain successful manufacturers, whose success in the world had in no degree been hindered by their want of discrimination in the matter of that most elusive letter in the alphabet—the eel-like H.

The better skilled the dressmaker, the more inclined is she to simplicity. A multiplicity of folds is often introduced in order to cover a radical error of cut, and the first cause of a possibly successful sort of drapery may have been a fundamental fault which had perforce to be concealed.

Hood the elder wrote slightly of home-made dresses, as of home-made bread, but we have improved in the manufacture of both articles since his day. Hundreds of English girls make their own gowns for every dozen who did so before the scientific system of cutting-out and making-up became generally known among us. The fact that a sufficient number of yards of a really

good material to make a dress can be bought for about the half the money that a skilful dressmaker would charge for the mere making of it is sufficient to induce a clever girl to use her fingers and employ her brains in a direction hitherto untried. To be able to have two dresses for the cost of making one is an irresistible inducement to practise the needle's art, and as a result a goodly number of the women of England are busier, happier, and better dressed than they were ten years ago; and they are, besides, ever so much more comfortable in their clothes than they used to be. Without any intention of being retrospectively rude, I might even venture to say that they are better tempered. To have a tight arm-hole is to be very uncomfortable, and discomfort brings out all one's mental and moral angles. The average dressmaker has a curious predilection for screwing her victim into a narrow-chested gown; and the manner in which she usually treats the human elbow is disrespectful in the extreme. It is not given room to bend, as a rule, and it is simply impossible to raise both hands to the head at the same time. To have to take off one's bodice in order to put on one's bonnet is not a circumstance adapted to promote a serene frame of mind.

It is a distressing fact that our tempers are largely swayed by those whom we employ. I heard a lady say the other day that servants had ruined her temper. I heard another remark, after a three weeks' experience of the doings of the British workman in her house, that he made her "feel like a fiend." A man whose duty in a large London establishment was to look after a score or so of boys employed there expressed himself to the same effect, but with much more force of language. If every one around us did their duty thoroughly, we might delusively imagine ourselves to be very good-tempered individuals. It would, indeed, be a not inapt definition of millennial felicity to have every one round us do all that is expected of them and never disappoint our expectations.